THE PROMISE OF MEANING IN INSTANTIATIONS OF THE MODERN POLITICAL MURAL

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Arts in Art Theory in the University of Canterbury

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2012

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my indebtedness to all who have assisted me with my research. I particularly express my gratitude and my highest regard for Professor Howard McNaughton for your support, for your intellectual guidance and for sharing your amazing breadth of knowledge and erudition; it has truly been a privilege to have worked under your supervision. Similarly my indebtedness and greatest respect for Professor Desmond Rochfort for having inspired this research and for your encouragement and for sharing your enthusiasm for this penetrating art form, and without whom this project would not have started. I acknowledge Professor Bill Rolston whose undaunted enthusiasm and dedicated research of the political wall paintings in the north of Ireland and their social and political significance he has matched with their performative importance and artistic merit and whose research and the material made available to me greatly aided my research. I particularly acknowledge Liam O'Ruairc whose dedicated and erudite research and insight into the politics of Ireland and the material he has made available has proven invaluable. I also acknowledge the unwavering commitment of Dr. Philip Ferguson for his insight into the politics of Ireland. I am equally indebted to the ever present encouragement of my daughter Sarah, my friend and confidant whose penetrating insights are humbling, for your insistence and endurance which has taught me to cherish the value of artistic challenge and self belief. I express my gratitude to my wife Susan whom I love and respect, for your unconditional support and quietly persuasive voice that instils calm and certainty. And I acknowledge with gratitude my son Leonard for your comradeship, for your inspirational strength of purpose and unconditional acceptance. Lastly but not least I acknowledge with thanks the University of Canterbury for its scholarship and institutional support.

ABSTRACT

This research project undertakes a critical evaluation of the signifying and ideological values articulated in two contrasting instances of politically motivated mural art created in circumstances where the production of that public mural painting has figured prominently as a manifestation or outcome of revolutionary change. Re-establishing the value and expressive possibilities of politically motivated art produced outside the standard conditions of the art market is as valid at the beginning of the twenty first century as it was during the European past from the Enlightenment to Communism, especially if we consider the aesthetics of Western art and its progress with regard—or disregard—to the immediacy of art that articulates a political idea. The universal accessibility of heterogeneous cultural products which is guaranteed by the globalization of contemporary information markets has replaced the universal and homogeneous political projects of the European past with a dominating discourse that identifies art with the art market and remains blind to art produced and distributed by any mechanism other than the market to the point that the balance of power between economy and politics in art has become distorted. Against this background I propose that the critical and affirmative potential of art demonstrates itself more powerfully and productively in the context of politics than in the context of the market.

In no other visual art form are those questions of what is to be represented, for whom, why, and for what purpose so clearly played out as in the public mural in the context of revolutionary transformation. Yet every interpretation, whether using proper or metaphorical strategies, that attempts to give form to the mural in order to reveal its meaning, will fail in that ambition. Notwithstanding this failure, the mural persistently presents as exemplary of these instantiations. Hence—and this provides the paradox—the mural will be exposed as those determinations that fail to show its essential meaning since there is none *a priori*. And since the question of essence no longer has any intrinsic meaning with regard to it, the mural is tied to structural rules that expose not the mural but the fate of their interpretations. It then is reasonable to relinquish the possibility of discussing the mural proper, every interpretation thereby composing layers upon layers of determinations that make the mural nothing other than the sum or process of what has been subjectively inscribed upon it. I propose that the mural is hence to be understood as that which 'mural–izes'—a verb—that is, to be understood as something that is ascribed to the mural as agent. Emerging from this possibility are the performance elements of provisionality and indeterminacy. A model of intermedial performance analysis, however, is not my concern—rather it is to focus the discourse about it in a larger context. That context cannot be fully explored without consideration of the imperative of rehearsal. To say that 'the final performance was perfected in the rehearsal' is to say that rehearsal anticipates the end result and that the end result is a repeat or rehearsal of the practice that was anticipated earlier. The performativity and indeterminacy that I argue is a mode of rehearsal in which the

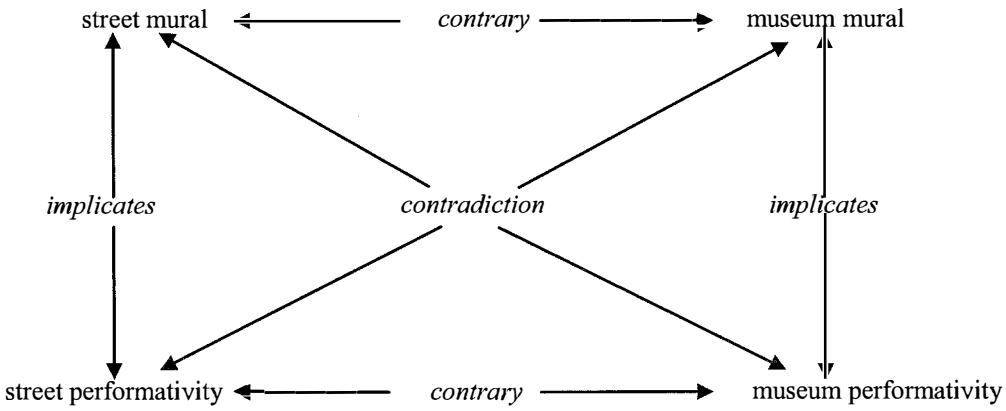
completed sign is unable to materialize—thereby allowing, for the viewer, an initiation into the process of engagement with the author's intention.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis undertakes a critical evaluation of the signifying and ideological values articulated in two contrasting instances of politically motivated mural art, those in the north of Ireland and in the mural from the German Democratic Republic entitled *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*. Both of these were produced in conjunction with radical social change. There are many parallels that characterize these exemplars, yet what fascinates in the similarity between them is the fertility of elaborate antitheses: the political wall paintings of Northern Ireland are precisely concerned with violence, colonial control, and nationhood in the present time. In this way these murals graphically illustrate Kevin Bean's generalization that the conflict between the politics of difference and the politics of universalism is fully reflected in the public and political sphere in Northern Ireland in which conflicting identities are widely perceived to be the central dynamics of political and cultural conflict in the region, subsuming and marginalizing other explanations rooted in universal categories such as class (Bean, 2007: p. 158). In contrast, the Early Bourgeois mural, although embedded in the universalism of class, is nonetheless tempered by a dynamic less concerned with the illustration of class than with the particularity of the partitioned East German nation state. This particularity is not sourced from the immediacy of conflict that is invested in the murals in the north of Ireland but rather from the transformation of an epochal event of conflict, the German Peasant Wars of the 16th century, into the mythical entity of the German Democratic Republic. This means that the mythification of the Wars with which the mural is concerned as an aesthetic metaphor leads to it being seen as simply another form of textuality, as when the event is not what happens but is that which can be narrated. This transformation has been brought about by investing the Reformation with a precise historical meaning in sharp contrast to the traditional theological narrative prevailing in Christianity. Consequently the mural as a form of aesthetic artefact signifies the nation state of East Germany less on its own strength than on its resistance to German partition and the West German state. Partition pivots on transcontextualization, and this is the primary indicator that the point of articulation of the mural in the contemporary period is no longer that of the East German nation state but a Federal Republic German mindset. This disabling of East German identity and its inscription in notions of German identity may be seen to resonate in the experience of Northern Ireland, where, as Bean rightly concludes, the concept of the nation state has yielded to notions of identity and allegiance (ibid). As will become apparent in later chapters, this yielding has produced a substantial shift in the form, content and investment of power in the Northern Ireland wall paintings in the contemporary period.

Whereas the Early Bourgeois mural is characteristically representational inviting a contemplative distance, violence and contestation mark the Northern Ireland murals with properties of immediacy and

disappearance. The volatility of insurgency produces a discourse of possibilities contingent on the immediacy of civil conflict rather than the connotative possibilities of signage. This effects not only the reading ascribable to the image, but more so the capacity for engagement or otherwise by which the mural itself delineates the discourse. The structure of constraints may be schematized according to the semiotic square developed by A. J. Greimas to problematize Saussurean binaries.



Here the top line represents the simple binary axis of the political wall paintings of Northern Ireland and the Early Bourgeois mural, which unfolds into the whole square of implication, contradiction and tension. This emerges once the indeterminacy of the street performance of the mural is transcontextualized to the museum. Now the immediacy of form of the street mural is not only opposed by the predication on symbolism of the museum mural; it is also contested by the performativity of the museum protocol. Similarly, the use of symbolism in the museum mural is contested by the indeterminacy of the street performance, while the original conflictual axis is displaced to an extent by a conflict of two performativities. The dynamic possibilities produced by the contradictories, contraries and implications between these sets of murals thus provide the substance for tracking down the discursive and relational values that they articulate. This, as Schleifer signals in his discussion of Greimas' semiotic square, "neither makes similarities into identities, nor rigorously maintains distinctions," (Schleifer, 1987: p. xxiii). Greimas calls this complex play of semiotic engagement a "double relation of disjunction and conjunction" (Greimas, 1987: p. 49) and Fredric Jameson uses it to show the "limits of a specific ideological consciousness" (Jameson, 1981: p. 47). These murals also provide a foundation of techniques through which systems of power relations and differentiation are exercised. I take as central what Michel Foucault articulates as the manner in which power and knowledge is generated in a multiplicity of

discourses, in which power relations and the formation of knowledge is exercised through techniques located in a complex system of processes inhering to social systems, and which are not reducible to the operations of state power alone (Foucault, 1977). The relevance of this research therefore does not solely relate to the specifics of mediation and power, but extends to assumptions and judgements operating in accounts of the aesthetic affected by such dialogical systems.

Personal Reflections

My interest in researching these murals stems back to my experience in South Africa of the impact of colonial discourse and resurgent nationalism. In a country troubled by conflict and violence involving both a political and a cultural struggle was, in my view, attributable to the foundations for conflict established by the British state's framing discourse. The violent colonization of South Africa beginning during the 19th century with the Cape Frontier Wars and culminating in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 saw control of its mineral and agricultural wealth pass into British hands effectively making colonial subjects of both native African and Afrikaner. As the dominant power in the region, this discourse emphasized a political structure that stressed the fundamental duality between the two traditions and laid the foundation for future conflict. Thus for example, the Native Land Act of 1913 preserved some 87% of the Union's land for the exclusive use of the white minority. It is this understanding that shaped the public sphere, rather than the aim of constructing an alternative political space to the particularized structures of Afrikaner and native African. Overturning colonial control, culminating in 1960 with the declaration of a Republic, did not however assure a singular nation state; rather it witnessed the reconstitution of a multitude of cultures that had been devastated by the colonial discourse. Conflicting differences centered on nationalism, nationhood and identity emerged from the ruins of these cultures, resulting in merciless and palpable conflict, repression, a brutal police state, killing, racialism and hatred. State policies of division were strategized through legislative control and geopolitical partition. As a result the South African state that otherwise had the foundations for developing as a unified nation state, were it not for colonial self interest, was fragmented at economic, political and cultural levels.

My understanding of the political space was conflated with my wish from an early age to be an artist. My first training in art education was academic and traditional. Nearly all students dealt with the same issues. We worked mostly from a central model. The range of imagery was relatively narrow and differences were measurable via painterly 'handwriting' rather than by content. But the politics of violence are so emphatic they call into question one's whole purpose and function (as an artist). This made me question the how and what of art, its intentions and aspirations. I became dissatisfied with the seeming gulf between the world of 'ethics' (and its lack) and the world of aesthetics. It seemed

inappropriate and escapist to make art detached from the pulse of contextual living. Of course the artist can deploy his or her art as a political instrument in the context of various continuing political struggles – as an act of political commitment. But such a commitment it seemed to me was often extraneous to art, intent on instrumentalizing art for external political interests and gains. This quandary suggests that if one is to speak of the ability of art to form a discourse that not only engages with sources of power, but which retains the ability to resist external influences that mediate its agency then the stability of aesthetic value judgments, which are based on certain criteria of choice, rules of inclusion and exclusion and which are not autonomous, are unsustainable. Hence, the stance driving my research is the struggle that art posits for social legitimacy in equal measure with politico-economic governance. I am drawn to art that emerges where there is societal disjuncture, where there are political, social and cultural schisms. The modern political mural is an effective barometer of this struggle. But this struggle is not merely to adopt a critical position. Rather the struggle is for recognition of all its forms and practices, including marginalized forms and artistic procedures because it is only on this level that art is able to engage with sources of power in the larger social fabric. On one level I was drawn to the mural entitled *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany* by reason of its stylistic format that adheres to a fine art tradition that fits into an art-immanent value judgment system. And yet this mural is an act of political commitment that does not instrumentalize its art for external political interests and gains. On the other hand my interest in the political wall paintings in the north of Ireland springs from their marginalized and rejected art form that both engages with sources of power and also articulates an agency unaffected by external influence. These instantiations of the political mural are found in partitioned and occupied geographies. They also bear the consequences of violence, power and oppression. These parallels with my own experiences have drawn me to their evaluation.

The value of comparison between the Northern Ireland murals and the Early Bourgeois mural arises not solely from the value of comparison between two seemingly different manifestations of the mural art form but also from the bearing this has on an understanding of the value of the image in the modern era. The claim for the autonomy of art, that is its ability to have its own voice that is not merely a supplementary decoration of external powers invested in it, is a crucial issue when discussing the relationship between art and resistance. It should not escape notice that the heightened value attributed to an object transferred from a street corner into a museum, which continues to legitimize and codify the operational framework of artistic merit, reveals that discursive norms and not visual perception or physical attributes are seminal to the genesis of aesthetic values. As Boris Groys argues this means that the overriding authority of the discursive norm nullifies aesthetic value systems.

> All these value judgements, criteria and rules are of course not autonomous. Rather, they reflect the dominant social conventions and power structures. We can safely say: There is no such thing as a purely aesthetic, art-immanent, autonomous value system.
>
> — Groys, 2008: p. 12

The absence of an overriding aesthetic value system implies a regime of what Boris Groys calls the "equal aesthetic rights for all artworks" (2008: p. 13). Under the assumption of this regime, every exclusion or inclusion is recognizable as a result of a heteronymous intrusion into the autonomous sphere of art—as the effect of pressure exercised by external forces and powers. This enables art to offer the image as a counterbalance to what is otherwise the imperfect balancing power of the discursive norm. This recognition opens up the possibility of resistance because it entails a battle for recognition. In this sense art and politics are fundamentally bound up with each other in a struggle for recognition. But the equality of aesthetic rights also suggests that, if all images are acknowledged as being of equal value, the artist would no longer be able to break taboos, provoke shock or extend boundaries of the acceptable. This suggests the terminal negation of art. But, as Groys argues, the equality of visual forms and media in terms of their aesthetic value does not necessarily mean an erasure of all difference between good art and bad art. On the contrary good art confirms this equality and produces images whose authority lies not in their exclusivity, but instead in their capacity to function as mere examples of the potentially infinite variety of images. They present not only themselves but also act as pointers to the inexhaustible mass of images of which they are, as Groys puts it, "delegates of equal standing" (2008: p. 17). The vast difference in media and form between the Northern Irish murals and the Early Bourgeois mural can thus be explained, not whereby one has aesthetic value and the other not, but rather whereby they each are exemplars which carry equal aesthetic value. In this way the test of aesthetic value of both the Northern Ireland murals and the Early Bourgeois mural is not an art-immanent value system (of which there is none) by which to compare them to one another, but their capacity to reference the infinite multitude of excluded images. This capacity lends them their fascination and significance within the finite contexts of political and artistic representation.

The Early Bourgeois Mural

It is necessary briefly to explain the origins of the two sets of murals. The Early Bourgeois mural is housed in a purpose built cylindrical panorama located on top of the steep Schlachtberg hill on the southern slopes of the Kyffhäuser Mountain. The panorama overlooks the little town of Bad Frankenhausen, in the German state of Thuringia. This site is one of particular political significance, famous as a focus of peasant uprisings during the 1524/25 German Peasant Wars when the insurgents under Thomas Müntzer were defeated by troops employed by the feudal lords, the Dukes of Saxony and Brunswick-Lüneburg in the last decisive battle of the war. The German communist regime, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) politically engaged with the Schlachtberg battle as a primal site of class struggle and during 1975 commissioned the Leipzig painter and academic, Professor Werner Tübke to paint the Early Bourgeois mural to be dedicated to the struggle of the peasant movement. The mural which was completed in 1987 is virtually unique in its dimensions. Spread across 1722sq.m its painted surface, according to Ruhrberg, makes it the largest oil painting in the world (Ruhrberg, 2000). More than three thousand life-sized figures are given an almost tangible plasticity. Painted in an idiom of formal realism indebted to the European art of the 15th and 16th centuries the panoramic narrative depicts a series of simultaneous images and extreme graphic events. "Only an unconditional, figurative realism can accomplish this task," wrote Werner Tübke, "a swarm of figures moving and acting in unison and in opposition. The surface of the painting will be completely covered, from top to bottom…"[1]

The mural follows a dramatic axis between a modern civilization (communism) that has perished and its successor. The uniqueness of communism is that unlike all other civilizations that had perished, which were pre-modern, and which therefore still had fixed identities that could be documented, the communist civilization used only those things that are modern and in common use. Thus the iconography of the mural is precisely the recurrent themes of Christian iconophilia and well known motifs particularly from graphic work of the Reformation period. And its thematic impulses are well known—the relation of the Reformation to the Peasant Wars of the 16th Century, to ascetism and humanism and the social structures of that time, class struggle as well as issues in ecclesiastical history, Roman law, the significance of protagonists such as Müntzer, Luther and Melanchthon, satanic cults and witchcraft, and ontological questions of history.

[1] Cited on line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the_contract.html retrieved 03/03/09.

Fig. 1 Battle Scene - *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

Fig. 2 Winter - *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

Fig. 3 Detail (1) Summer - *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

Fig. 4 Detail (2) Summer - *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

Although the productive forces of artisans, craftsmen and women, labourers, scholars and academic researchers, and the artist Werner Tübke and assistant artists, produced this mural and the panorama building over twelve years, it was not the working class but the vantage point of the Politbüro that structured the ideology on which the social action was based. That ideology was the collective Marxist state of East Germany. Its ideology therefore was not conditioned by an existing collective society but was one intended to represent the society. Consequently, the thematic content and form of the mural and the panorama as a sign of a working class tradition of revolution pertaining to the GDR, resulted, as Gramsci has defined hegemony, from the production and dissemination of ideas and knowledge by those intellectuals concerned with the production, distribution, interpretation of ideas and discourse, that is to say the Politbüro together with a body of historians and academics, and of course the artist himself.

When I first entered the huge panoramic vault that enfolds the mural I was forcibly affected by the enormity of the painting. The painting is 152 meters wide, 14 meters high and embraces some three thousand life size figures painted in a style reminiscent of the 16th Century European pictorial tradition. Its form and content are unlike contemporary paintings; yet its effect is to transport the medieval epoch in a massive and perplexing narrative of complex socio-political and religious situations into the present with a powerful sense of relevance. The reason for my astonishment was firstly the surprise of stumbling onto the aura of this fascinating art work. And then the puzzlement—how was it possible for an artist to produce this enormous work? It would be easy to carry into the work the prejudices of a liberal market oriented state characterized by individual creation in private studies and the museum system, by the strict separation between the privately owned and the publicly owned. But of course this massive painting is not the product of the class conditioned illusion of absolute individualism. It is embedded in another system — the East German communist state and the common ownership of materiality and ideas. Thus, while the painter's deployment of a multiplicity of narrative avoids the transparency of political rhetoric, at the same time the mural shapes the singularity of the required political propaganda; and that propaganda was to materialize the sign of East German nationhood through its incorporation of the medieval epoch as one belonging exclusively to it.

The relationship between art and war is an ambivalent one. True, art needs peace and quiet for its development, and yet it has time and again used this quiet to sing the praises of war heroes, and the glory and suffering of war. The division of labour was quite clear in the past—the warrior did the fighting and the artist narrated or depicted it. The artist provided the means to inscribe the deeds into memory. The Early Bourgeois mural articulates this tradition. But it pursues the utopian logic of inclusion, based on a common commitment to a radical project, rather than the logic of exclusion, struggle and criticism that

grounds the ideal of the individualism of victorious war heroes. This amounts to an extension of the Communist ideology which sought to be universalist in the sense of a dialectical unity of all oppositions. It was a serious attempt to think through the end of history, understood here not in the same way as Francis Fukuyama presents it as the final victory of the market over every possible universal political project but, on the contrary, by the ultimate victory of a political project — a radical absolute break with the past and with any kind of distinct cultural identity. Thus the Reformation as the prime signifier is a sign that was materialized by the monumental museum and the mural taken together. This sign whereby the Peasant rebellion and the priest Thomas Müntzer constituted the German people's first radical attempt to transform society is the starting point for the transition to the East German nation state. Although the Peasant War had ended in defeat the GDR invoked the idea that the 16th century peasants' aims of building a free, just and peaceful society had eventually been realized with the founding of the new state in 1949. This was not mere theory for the radical transformation of society on a practical level occurred with the transference of every individual inheritance into collective property.

The specific meaning and use of the iconography could function and be demonstrated only in the specific context of the German Democratic Republic. Now that this context has dissolved, the iconography has returned to its western sources. In the contemporary period that has witnessed the removal of German partition and its reunification under the mantle of the Federal republic, the mural has largely been ascribed to the camp which conceives of culture as a transcendental product of the human spirit and which has attributed a number of meanings to the term 'culture'. The first of these terms is associated exclusively with an emphatic response to the aesthetic ideals of form and beauty to be found in great art. Another is that of the 'human spirit' transcending the boundaries of time and nation to speak of a hypothetical 'universal man'. However, these universal categories have not been formed and brought to the mural in the restricted elitist sense by a great artist; rather they constitute a distraction from the working class tradition that the mural was intended to reinforce. It is of course correct to say that art is political and that attempts to define art as autonomous and to situate it above or beyond the political field are naive, but as Groys argues, art cannot be reduced to a specific field among many other fields that function as arenas for political decision. This means that the relationship of art to politics is better explained by thematizing the dependence of political discourses, strategies and decisions on aesthetic attitudes, tastes, preferences and dispositions (2008: p. 163). This thematization is discernible in the Early Bourgeois mural in which its imagery avoids political rhetoric while at the same time fulfilling the terms of the commission for an aesthetic work that reflected a specific historical period as the forerunner of the East German nation. With the removal of partition and the consequential shift from the command economy to the market economy we find the aesthetic taste for the homogeneous, the universalism of

common community replaced by the liberal market orientated preference for the heterogeneous, difference and openness.

The effects of power at this ideological level become discernible in the mural. The prioritization of ideology presupposes the classical philosophical model of a human endowed with a consciousness which power is presumed to seize upon. In both its form and content the mural facilitates this process. Firstly its symbolism is structured on a tradition and convention that lends the work psychological credibility and a sense of collective involvement. More importantly the symbolism on which it is predicated carries the same conventional associations today that it carried at the moment of its invention – which is the medieval period represented in the mural. Underlining this sense of continuity and permanence is a mode of contemplative realism which opens the mural to rational persuasion. Gilles Deleuze has already identified a conceptual process of this sort as a fruitless attempt to raise representation to an Immanent plane (Deleuze, 2001: pp. 26/27). In the politico-aesthetic discourse it emerges therefore that its creative principles are displaced with questions of ownership and mediation. This is possible because its iconography contains a multiplicity of connotative possibilities that are available for appropriation by the dominant authority. This means that the German mural does not have its own autonomy. Its volatility resides in reconfigured historical specificities. Shifting political differences have radically moved the interpretation within the contemporary epoch. During its life in the country of East Germany the authority of Gramsci's organic intellectuals ensured that the sign of East German collective nationalism materialized in the form of the mural and the museum. But the dominant authority of the Federal Republic of Germany has supplanted this reading by placing emphasis on artistic aestheticism. In doing so it has sanctioned a universal category of 'human nature', rather than that of class, a categorization that resonates in the context of the prevailing capitalism of its institutions.

The Political Wall Paintings in the North of Ireland

> I cannot sink my identity in Dublin, nor in New York or Toronto, or London or Glasgow either, for it is skulking somewhere in the fierce, drab, absurd streets of Belfast which was once Beal Feirste, and that's why I'm learning Irish. The taig (Catholic) gazes over his shoulder at the Dail while the prod (Protestant) turns his face towards Buckingham P., but they both know secretly that their corporate soul is out there somewhere in No Man's Land. Until it is located and defined, talk of the

> reunification of Ireland is empty. Not until the North can put words to its sense of selfhood will the island become united again, whether the Border goes or stays. The effort will be harder for the prod, there are so many things for him to learn (like Irish), but it will be subtler for the taig, since what he has to find out is altogether less easily described.
>
> — Stewart Parker cited in Richtarik, p 14. 1999.

For convenience sake the political wall paintings in the north of Ireland may be addressed in three parts: those preceding the 1981 Hunger Strike, those that turn on the return in 1968 of the decades of violent conflict in the north of Ireland euphemistically called the 'Troubles' and finally those that follow on after the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. The Troubles returned to Ireland in 1968. As a result there were 18 deaths recorded in 1969, 28 in 1970, 180 in 1971 and 496 in 1972. Central to this escalation was the growing conflict between the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and the British Army. When the Troubles reignited, not only was the IRA an insignificant part of the political equation, but partition was not an even issue, Catholics were demanding to be equal British citizens. But soon it grew into a conflict not just between Republicanism and the British state, but also between republicanism and constitutional nationalism. Between 1969 and 2009, there were 3,586 people killed (1,915 civilians, 1,123 security forces), with more than 36,000 shootings 16,209 bombings and attempted bombings, 2,225 cases of arson, 22,539 armed robberies and over 47,000 people wounded. Most killings took place in the north of Ireland, especially Belfast. [2]

An Irish Republican Army (IRA) poster from the early period of the 'Troubles' carries the photograph of an armed IRA combatant in full camouflage. Reinforcing the poster's written text: 'Loose-talk costs lives / In taxis / On the phone / In clubs and bars / At football matches / At home with friends / Anywhere! / Whatever you say - say nothing', the balaclava worn by the combatant covers his head, including his mouth but not his eyes.

[2] On line at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/book/index.html#append retrieved 10 August 2010.

Fig. 5 Poster - Loose Talk Costs Lives

This agitational imagery which conveys information about violence, while having its own power, nevertheless conflates with the violence against which it issues a warning in the sense that there is an essential relation between writing and violence. Jacques Derrida has demonstrated this relationship in *On Grammatology*. "Anterior to the possibility of violence in the current and derivative sense", we find, he argues, "the violence of the *arche*-writing, the violence of difference, of classification and of the system of appellations" (Derrida, 1976: p. 110/162). In discounting the metaphysics of presence, Derrida here displaces the logocentrism of speech with originary violence whereby the written is possible only on account of this 'originary' deferral of meaning. The originary violence of the system of differences, which Derrida here identifies is inextricably bound together with a second and a third violence, the violence which is commonly conceived as the attempt to put an end to violence – the institution of law – but which is revealed as a violence because of its apparent suppression of the originary difference; and the violence which is the necessary (and empirical) possibility of phenomenal violence as the consequence of the inability of the law to suppress its illegality in relation to originary difference.

> Out of this arche–violence, forbidden and therefore confirmed by a second violence that is reparatory, protective, instituting the 'moral,' prescribing the concealment of writing and the effacement and obliteration of the so-called proper name which was already dividing the proper, a third violence can *possibly* emerge or not (an empirical possibility) within what is commonly called evil, indiscretion, rape...
>
> — Derrida, 1976: p. 112.

The emergence of these last two violences in the political, social and personal context of Northern Ireland is discernible in the empirical possibility emerging from the writing on the poster. This can be explained by looking at a small mural painted on an office wall on Falls Road in West Belfast, which, resonating with the anonymous form of threat implicit in the Loose Talk poster, shows a faceless armed policeman with the writing: 'Disband the RUC' (Royal Ulster Constabulary). The issue of policing, and in particular the acceptability of the RUC in catholic areas, was high on the political agenda for many years, the reason being that the RUC, which was 92 per cent Protestant was rightly perceived to be acting in collusion with the British Army. A commission established to investigate allegations of collusion, the Stevens Three report, found that members of the RUC and British Army colluded with the largest loyalist paramilitary group, the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), to murder Catholics. Sir John Stevens said informants and agents "were allowed to operate without effective control and to participate in terrorist crimes." [3] The symbol of the RUC officer was often painted with an 'orange sash' as in this example. This referred to the fact that many RUC officers were members of the overtly political protestant fraternal organization, the Orange Order which tolerates only protestant ascendancy.

Fig. 6 Mural - Disband the RUC.

Following upon the IRA ceasefire of August 1994 a mural commissioned by the republican Ballymurphy Mural Project Committee was painted on the gable end of a terraced housing estate in West Belfast carrying a number of powerful symbols and prescriptive text. A 9mm pistol dominates the image. The weapon is marked: 'Authorized by MI5', and stamped with 'Approved On Behalf Of Her Majesty's Government'. Painted over a background of red and black it is juxtaposed against the text 'COLLUSION'

[3] On line at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/2955941.stm retrieved 05/03/09.

and the quote: 'An element of the UVF were covertly enlisted by the Ulster Government at a fee of ten shillings a day to promote a sectarian war – UVF leader Gusty Spence.' Below the writing, a body is laid out on a slab and crosses mark hundreds of graves. The slab is placed over the warning: 'IT'S NOT AN ILLUSION!'

Fig. 7. Collusion – It's Not an Illusion.

The reinvention of violence that the large and aesthetically impressive mural in Ballymurphy transfers from the poster moves the provisionality of violence away from the poster's agitprop contestation towards a construction of identity built around violence. This is a shift from experiential indeterminacy to a system of signs and reductive metaphor. Although the politics of meaning formation, particularly through the reconstruction of historical events, is evident in both the Early Bourgeois mural and in many murals painted in Northern Ireland, nevertheless the contestation of meaning formation emerges emphatically in those of Northern Ireland in which the investment of power in the murals reflects directly upon the dichotomy adhering to the divided communities' understanding of self determination and the primacy of the nation.

The political wall paintings of Belfast, Derry and other areas of Northern Ireland present the potential for engagement precisely because the landscape of power and terror does not just include 'physical force'. It also includes the broader text of the discursivity of the media and local stories along with virtual powers of surveillance technology and importantly of legislation. For example the effects of violence on discursive power have resulted in temporary and emergency legislation, (The Northern Ireland Emergency Provisions Act [EPA] and the Prevention of Terrorism Act [PTA] granting powers of

detention and interrogation.) Although designed as temporary provisions, the EPA and PTA were continually renewed until their replacement by the permanent provisions of the UK Terrorism Act (2000). The British government thus altered its own legislative performativity in relation to the violence – not only by adopting extreme measures but also by making the emergency provisions temporary. The volatility of the region was thus implicated in the provisionality of the legislation designed to deal with it. Simultaneously, Anti Terrorist Laws have mediated the performative capacities of paramilitaries. For example it is illegal to display sectarian clothes, flags or symbols, or to wear a hood or balaclava. Leaders of groups such as Sinn Fèin and the UDA were banned from speaking directly in the media by a broadcast ban of 1988. The extent of this mediation is most evident in the 2000 Terrorism Act's definition of terrorism as the 'use *or* threat of action'. [4] This effectively renders ambiguous the difference between violence and discourse. Alex Houen in *Terrorism and Modern Literature* demonstrates that the presence of the IRA was very often augmented by rumour mongering when he cites Ciaran Carson's poem *The Star Factory* from the anthology *Belfast Confetti*: "IRA men were practically invisible . . . seeming to exist by rumour or osmosis in a narrative dimension largely inaccessible to the overwhelmingly non-combatant Catholic population" (Houen, 2002: p.117). As Roland Barthes has already pointed out in *The Rhetoric of Image*, although narratives or information about violence can have their own power, very often violent events are conflated with linguistic anecdote and imagery (Barthes 1977: pp. 32-51); a message therefore may shift between a series of dangerous possibilities. That is to say that what it conveys literally becomes figurative. Thus the IRA 'Loose Talk' poster not only warns against the danger that results from having a conversation monitored but also contains an implied threat against anyone who fails to heed the advice. Its literal parts, its linguistic anecdote and imagery of loose talk and the camouflaged combatant translate into metonyms - 'shooting off' (your mouth) in turn conflates into an act of violence which in turn may attract a violent response. As a result very often metonyms or tropes and killing become conjoined to produce a silenced figure – the victim, the one who 'whatever you say' says nothing. But this transformation may be identified as a form of violence in itself and is all the more reason to distinguish the act of mural painting from the material force of bombings and shootings - that is to say that engagement with it is not necessarily bombing and shooting itself.

To make general claims about the narrational or symbolic nature of violence thus becomes problematic if we consider that violence, symbol and performativity have been mediated in Northern Ireland in very specific ways. It is not simply a matter of a more general agonism of narratives, for physical force has played its own part in disrupting the production of discourses – whether political, legal

[4] My italics. Reference to the legislation is available on line at http://hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/00011 retrieved 07/07/10.

or cultural. Coupled with the provisions for territory and nationality evident in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement in which the Anglo-Irish dimension and the issue of consensus was affirmed, the anti-terrorist laws can be seen as contributing to a complex and general state of provisionality. It is precisely because potentiality is a very real concern that these murals are saturated with the conditional. This is all the more reason for paramilitaries and security forces alike to map out situations.

In Northern Ireland, territory has been a ground for conflict in many ways, just as it had been in Ireland as a whole ever since British colonization. Contested space is not metaphorical but is material. The land itself is Irish to some, British to others. These anomalies and dichotomies form a thin veil over the disputed status of the United Kingdom in Ireland. When the Government of Ireland Act of 1921 partitioned six counties of Ulster from the newly created Irish Free State and retained them as part of the United Kingdom, the stage was set for a drawn out battle over the primacy of the nation, class content and self determination. It is hence no coincidence that the working class districts of Loyalism and Republicanism are recognizable as having an internal homogeneity that is made legible with their own murals; nor should it surprise us that within these camps, particularly that of Loyalism, murals map out territorial divisions between its different factions. But attempts to map out situations are frequently undermined by Belfast's own shifting contours. Those indices identified by Kevin Lynch in *The Image of the City* which otherwise provide a city with legible associations are invariably made provisional because they avoid the moment: ramps, barricades, diversions, 'Peace Lines' [5] and technological surveillance mechanisms. Here we find the volatile diagram of the city versus the containing map of the security forces. They both admit contingency and revision but remain ontologically distinct: physical force and powers of surveillance might confront each other but they retain their own potentials. Thus while the mapping is provisional any attempt to shift it through such acts as defacing or removing murals is reckless and dangerous. This unresolved volatility is not an abstract matter because the body itself is glued to the provisionality of the mapping where the body itself becomes a map. For example Houen cites Ciaran Carson's short prose piece, "*Question Time*" in which Carson recounts a bicycle ride down memory lane that takes him from one side of Belfast's Peace Line to the other. Having wandered into the Protestant Shankill Road area, he makes his way back to the familiar Catholic territory of the Falls Road only to find himself being hauled off his bike by three men who then drag him into a building, frisk him and interrogate him:

[5] So-called "Peacelines," nicknamed "Bloodlines," snake through the city of Belfast. They were erected in 1969, with the arrival of British troops in N Ireland. Temporary walls of sandbags have been replaced by more than a dozen permanent walls of brick, wrought iron and corrugated steel. Some sections have two parallel walls as tall as 40 feet and a ``demilitarized zone" between them.

> You were seen coming from the Shankill. / Why did you make a U-turn? / Who are you? / [...] You were seen. / Coming from the Shankill. / Where are you from? / Where is he from? / The Falls? When? What Street? / What was the number of the house? / How far down the street was that? / When was that? / What streets could you see from the house? / Cape Street? Yeah. / Frere Street? Yeah. Where was Cape Street? / [...] How old were you then?
>
> — Carson cited in Houen, 2002: p. 260.

He notes that for Carson, the trauma of the encounter is indissociable from the men's threatening insistence that a cartographic slip on his part is a matter of life and death. There is no question of him stopping them in their tracks; he is being plotted by them. Thus Carson writes of the experience:

> The map is pieced together bit by bit. I am this map, which they examine, checking it for error, hesitation, inaccuracy; a map which no longer refers to the present world but to a history, these vanished streets; a map which is this moment, this interrogation, my replies. Eventually I pass the test. I am frisked again, this time in a regretful habitual gesture. *A dreadful mistake*, I hear one of them saying, *has been made* and I get the feeling he is speaking in quotation marks, as if this is a bad police B-movie and he is mocking it, and me, and him.
>
> — Carson cited in Houen, 2002: p. 260.

Houen points out that the borders of the map that Carson is forced to embody become increasingly indefinite as the interrogation proceeds. Charting his present "hesitations" and "accuracy" along with his capacity to remember "vanished streets" and people, the map becomes a singular diagram of the whole encounter: "this moment, this interrogation, my replies". If the interrogators are satisfied that they have extracted a watertight script, for Carson there remains the conviction that the script is contingent upon slips of memory, hesitations, and the sheer ability to reply and not break down; in short, it involves a dangerous performativity—dangerous because it admits an unstable series of possibilities. As this scene of interrogation implies, possibility is not an abstract matter in Belfast at this time: rather it is part of a whole cityscape of terror in which suspicion and distrust, not knowing who's who, aptly spelled out in the Loose Talk poster. Ironically, it also means that the possibility of speaking or performing as another undermines the surety of sectarian mapping.

Digested, transfigured and recreated with the own language of the community generating them the political wall paintings have assimilated and absorbed these variables of political terror. Rather than what Roland Barthes describes as an 'agglutination of symbols' (Barthes, 1977), signification is here

deferred, its affirmative and critical potential demonstrating itself productively in the political context. For example a republican mural on the gable end of a housing estate in Ballymurphy, Belfast painted in 2001 shows community support for an IRA active service unit having a meal in a local safe house; weapons rest against the dining table. A plaque explains that the protagonists were killed by the RUC and the British army. Its facticity of brute or palpable observational facts of which John Searle speaks in *The Construction of Social Reality* is qualified with a barrage of modal auxiliaries: the service men are not portrayed as masked ciphers, such as the representation in the Loose Talk poster, and are dressed in everyday clothing yet camouflage kit is shown resting on the floor; has the violence ended; or is it merely suspended; are there others would-be or has-been or may-be active units; where does the surveillance end and begin, will the army fire again. On a ridge overlooking the housing estate the Peace Line stretches across the skyline forming a horizon against each end of the mural and standing ominously large behind the mural is the RUC watchtower from which the police and army had fired on the neighbourhood. The mural is thus more than a mere monument about the past commemorating the dead. And what is more the mural itself has been altered since its first appearance in 2001; the large figure in the forefront who originally appeared bearing an automatic firearm and wearing a paramilitary jacket has had the weapon removed and his clothing replaced.

The possibility escapes of revealing certainty of the mural's meaning; it is unable to materialize, despite its persistence. The performativity and indeterminacy of the mural that emerges is a mode of rehearsal manifesting as an overt aesthetic activity that struggles with political power for equality. The critical potential of this imagery accordingly can be seen to produce a productive discourse with the shifting political parameters mediated by the ceasefire of 1998.

Fig. 8 Mural – Ballymurphy (1)

Similarly on Ballymurphy Road a new mural was painted in 2002 portraying two local IRA men, Jim Bryson and Patrick Mulvenna. On 31 August 1973 the two were fired on by the British army. Mulvenna died immediately and Bryson three weeks later. Almost thirty years later the mural was painted on the spot where the incident had occurred. The victims were known to the community, for whom they were friends, neighbours or relatives. The apparently undemanding referent conjures up a myriad of emotions and considerations about life, death, the state, justice, resistance. The use of zeugma here explains much, for these murals are themselves a montage of what has happened, what is happening and what might happen next. Although these images have their own contingency, reflecting the narrativity of place and time, the contingency is yoked to the historical terrain. Instead of a code to the city's transience we are presented with the mutability of a model that is itself interactive. This iconography is tensed to the 'ifs' and 'buts' of Belfast's history. Where the city's cartography manifests its own immanent and dangerous temporality, for example through surveillance, the peace lines, shifting road patterns and rebuilt and repositioned housing estates, the contingency, potential and possibility of these murals becomes real and figures as variable in itself and open to a multitude of associations.

Fig. 9 Mural – Ballymurphy (2)

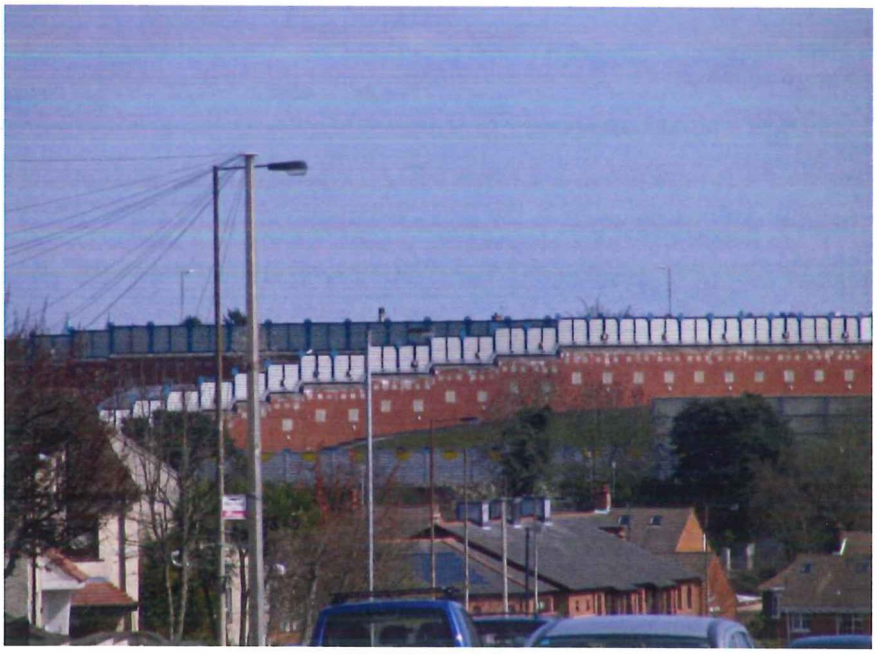


Fig.10 Belfast Peace Line

Fig. 11 Peace Line and surveillance equipment – housing estate West Belfast

The murals oppose a central component of significance in the political domain against the metonymical relationship of artist and art that emerges in the Early Bourgeois mural. This is not a case of a negation between art and life so that everything is art and everyone an artist. Rather, it is the politicization of aesthetics where the people have a role to play, a revolutionary praxis and polar opposite of the fascist notion of the aestheticization of politics. Walter Benjamin speaks of these notions in works such as *The Arcades Project* and *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. For Benjamin aesthetic politics causes individuals to identify with that which compels them into conformity and sanctifies resolute and charismatic leadership as a self sufficient force or auratic presence. By contrast the emulative and authoritative role of political aesthetics in the formation of national consciousness found in these murals is brought about by an audience participating not as passive witnesses to referential experience in the traditional audience role but rather by an audience intervening to express their own order, their own certainty. Although the starting point of these murals begins in an established art canon of williamite imagery for the most part they have been painted by working class people with little or no art training working in groups, artisans, house painters, ship yard workers, taxi drivers, political activists and prisoners, most of who are anonymous. Many hundreds have been painted for over a century, starting in

1908 when the first recorded mural appeared in Belfast. And unlike the Bad Frankenhausen museum, their location is not privileged nor do they have its panoramic proportions. They are located mostly, but not exclusively on the gable ends and walls of housing estates in working class communities. Many have been painted in a day or overnight and replaced the next day. They may be deliberately damaged, painted out, defaced or replaced, or lost through housing redevelopment or neglect. Unlike the contemporary cultural understanding of the Early Bourgeois mural as being transcendent, general and universal the murals in the north of Ireland operate under a meaning of culture which is central to the social and cultural life of the local and partisan communities. Their contextual and aesthetic specificities are driven by overt political demands and contested ideologies and necessarily speak to the communities deeply held experiences. Across the contested binary of unionism and republicanism, the murals exhibit contrary, contradicted and implicated counter-positions that are nevertheless grounded in opinion and experience. They are not measurable against ideal art's dogmatic transcendent and universal model; thus they avoid the practice of formal construction, with its attendant problems relating to structure and internal limitations on the invention of symbols, problems and concepts, (as occurs with the Early Bourgeois work) and the improbability of articulating a political resonance on an immanent plane of conceptual identity construction in the sense of which Deleuze speaks in *Pure Immanence*: "Absolute immanence is in itself: it is not in something, *to* something; it does not depend on an object or belong to a subject. [...] When the subject or the object falling outside the plane of immanence is taken as a universal subject or as any object to which immanence is attributed, [...] immanence is distorted, for it then finds itself enclosed in the transcendent" (Deleuze, 2001: pp. 26/27).

An understanding of the Northern Ireland murals however would be incomplete without an enquiry into the murals that have appeared either side of the decades 1980 to 2000. The murals that emerged during the eighty years preceding the 1980's may be characterized as the King Billy murals of Protestant Ascendancy; those that have emerged following on the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 as the State sponsored Reimaged murals.

In constitutional terms the Good Friday Agreement that was signed on the 10th April 1998 established the Northern Ireland Assembly with devolved legislative powers; this period has also seen a de-escalation of violence. The Agreement, which has sealed the Troubles in a measure of conflictual negotiation, contains provision for a Renewing Communities Action Plan, described as "Place and Identity/In Art we Trust", and subsequently labelled the 'Re-Imaging Communities Programme'. The programme is a grants programme enabling local organizations and community groups, previously not involved in wall painting and community art, to engage with professional artists to promote culture and arts within the local community. The programme, which prescribes cultural diversity through strategies

of community murals that reflect the aspirations of the various communities, bolts the art involved to the postmodern notions of multiculturalism and diversity. This means that the power of bureaucratic mediums to shape community response is inscribed in the programme. Consequently the murals which once represented the political aspirations of the communities now potentially reflect the states prescribed cultural demand.

The framing discourse of the Peace Agreement however, has failed to construct an alternative political space suited to the particularized structures of republicanism and unionism. Rather it blankets over these differences with the postmodern catchphrases of bicultural tolerance. This helps to maintain the sectarian division (and hence the status quo of British presence). The Bombay street mural which I have argued is 'tensed to the dangerous contingencies of Belfast' (p196), is evidence of this failure and is quite unlike the reimaging murals referenced in Chapter 5. I argue that the reimaging murals are a form of production art aimed at organizing relations of power rather than reflecting the views of the community and an attempt to impose these views (biculturalism) on the community rather than accommodating the particular structures of each side. The Bombay mural insofar as it reflects the 'way things are' is evidence of the failure of the peace agreement to take these structures into account. Consequently the Agreement does not override and nullify all preceding conflict. Elements of contestation between the protagonists and with the British state are present in the murals. This includes both those murals painted before or independently of the Reimaging programme, and also those painted under its auspices. This arises by reason of the territorial positioning of the programmed murals that are placed in separate catholic and protestant areas. The murals therefore do not posit a simple dichotomy between nationalism and loyalism, catholic and protestant but point to a complex process that fosters an apparently variable mix of alliances, identities and actions to such a degree as to be defined by that mix. This means that the murals straddle the divide between the private or local conflict and the war's political or master cleavage. The mural that proclaims: "We will Never Accept a United Ireland" or the mural showing a hand adorned with the Union Jack removing a bloodied Northern Ireland from the rest of its territorial body, articulate the master cleavage while graffiti such as "We will never be second rate citizens to you scummy bastards" speaks the language of the private conflict.

This discourse and the identity politics of cultural diversity and difference cannot be interpreted correctly without being related to the market-driven practice of cultural diversification and differentiation. This practice has opened up a third option for dealing with cultural identity beyond suppressing it or finding a representation for it in the context of existing political and cultural institutions—namely to sell, to commodify, to commercialize this cultural identity on the international media and tourist markets. This highlights the one sided weight that the economy has in the balance of power relations between art and

the economy. This is a balance whereby art generally speaking we could say as a representation of itself attempts to offer an image that balances the imperfect power of the state. But under the influence of the market, the taste for diversity has infused interpretation with plurality so that the possibility of accepting one interpretation as true is rejected. This is relevant to political propaganda in art because such art participates in a struggle for power rather than represent it. The homogeneity of art produced as political propaganda, unlike artwork produced under market conditions and brought to the public as a commodity, does not fit well within the postmodern taste for variety. Of course the relationship of diversity and difference with homogeneity and universalism is one which presupposes a certain aesthetic choice. The aesthetic preference for the heterogeneous, for the mix, is ostensibly very open, very inclusive. This may be characterized as a postmodern strategy that aims to open up the closed systems of modernism to the heterogeneity of texts such that the image is not necessarily privileged, unique, symbolic, visionary, but rather is a text that is already written, allegorical, contingent, and open to synthetic contradictions. The origin of this dominating postmodern aesthetic taste for diversity can be traced to the contemporary market. As Groys puts it in his *Art Power*, it is "a taste formed by the contemporary market and it is a taste for the market" (2008, p.151). As he proceeds to argue, the emergence of the taste for the diverse and different was directly related to the emergence of globalized information, media and entertainment markets in the 1970's and the expansion of these markets in the 80's and 90's. Every expanding market produces diversification and differentiation of the commodities that are offered on the market.

Yet the postmodern aesthetic sensibility is not as tolerant as it may appear at first glance, rejecting as it does the uniform, repetitive, ascetic, reductionist and homogeneous. This complicity between the discourse of cultural diversity and the diversification of cultural markets means that aesthetics which seem not to be different, not diverse, not colourful enough confront the postmodern pluralist taste with the homogeneity and universalism of its uniform 'Other'. Such art moves away from the pluralism of the relatively open society toward a utopian community based on a common commitment to a certain radical project that is based on a historical rupture that rejects heterogeneity for the benefit of the people. Universalism in this sense springs from an idea or artistic project that aims to unite people of different backgrounds—one that transcends the diversity of their already existing cultural identities and that can be joined by everybody. In his *Art Power*, Groys links the notion of *metanoia* [6]—of transition from an old identity to a new one, of inner change, of inner rupture, of rejecting the past and embracing the future to this notion of universalism and radicalism (2008: p. 152), which means a historical rupture, the rejection of diversity and difference in the name of a common cause. Today however, as Groys

[6] From the Greek μετάνοια compounded from the preposition μετά (after, with) and the verb νοέω (to perceive, to think, the result of perceiving or observing).

argues, to be universal means to be able to aestheticize one's identity as it already is—a kind of readymade in the universal context of diversity. Under these conditions becoming universal, uniform is commercially inoperative and aesthetically unattractive.

Radical political aesthetics on the other hand situates itself at the 'degree zero' (*degré zéro*) of literary and rhetorical taste, as Roland Barthes defined it (Barthes, 1967). That is to say at the degree zero of diversity and difference. This means a certain aesthetic preference for the uniform—as opposed to the diverse—is required to endorse radical political and artistic projects. It is paradoxical that on one hand these politics are truly democratic because they are open to all, but on the other hand they appeal to a rare aesthetic taste at degree zero. This means that a commitment to radical aesthetics is required to accept radical politics producing relatively closed communities united by an identical project, by an identical vision. This means that postmodern taste is fundamentally an antiradical taste. Consequently art becomes politically effective only when it is made beyond or outside the art market—in the context of direct political propaganda. These arguments are already well known and have been demonstrated by many theorists including Benjamin, Adorno, Horkheimer and others. Although it may occasionally receive economic support from the state or from various political or religious movements, its production, evaluation and distribution do not follow the logic of the market. This kind of art is not a commodity. Of course this art does not provide content so much as follow a certain ideological goal to which the art is subordinate, but its ideology is based on a vision—on a certain image of the future—be it revolution, paradise, socialism. The market on the other hand does not have a vision – it circulates images but it does not have its own image. As Groys states "... the market operates by an invisible hand behind the heterogeneity, diversity and plurality of individual artistic projects—censoring, editing and combining these projects according to its own mix. By contrast the power of an ideology is the power of a vision" (2008, p. 152). This means that by serving any political or religious ideology an artist ultimately serves art. That is why an artist can also challenge a regime based on an ideological vision more effectively than the artist can challenge the art market. Art that is critical of commodification differentiates itself from other commodities through its ability to be a self critical commodity. But any critique of the market is only relevant if it draws attention to the art that is overlooked by the art market and art institutions as art that destabilizes the market. The critical and affirmative potential of art demonstrates itself therefore more powerfully and productively in the context of politics than in the context of the market.

The political wall paintings of Northern Ireland that manifest outside the Reimaging programme and the German mural share this service to art. They are both examples of radical political art that do not fit well within the framework of the taste for heterogeneity; rather their origins labour under assumptions of homogeneity, regional specificity and the universal. I mean by universal, the artistic project aimed at

uniting people. Of course loyalist and republican are tensed to a violent conflict. However the murals are not concerned with investigating artistic devices that give expression to the divisive effects of this violence but are concerned with the effects of art on the audience. This means that they have chosen not to change art but to create a new public who will share their own taste and see the world through their eyes. But of course these murals spring from conflicting powers whose opponents are not malleable without force exerted on them. The engagement with violence is thus critical to these murals. The taste for diversity is irrelevant. Importantly the distinction of the Northern Ireland murals lies in their engagement with the general state of provisionality relating to territory, events and security, and by linking these to the performative potentials of both violence and imagery they offer new ways of thinking about the murals in terms of the relation of violence to textuality.

The dismantling of Germany's partition and the continuing partition of Ireland can be seen to have the same global market imperative of expanding market accessibility. The result is that in the contemporary epoch the interpretation of the murals springs largely from the same origin – the international market driven need for commodified diversity. Of course the political project resulting in the partition remaining in Ireland and the political project resulting in the reunification in Germany manifest different outcomes but both ensure a capitalist economy and the privatization of ownership - the same narrow elite of owners and managers who control the private economy and who control the state, a very narrow nexus of corporate media and state managers and owners. This ultimately proves to be just as false a construct as nationalization has been. The same East German state that commissioned the Early Bourgeois mural and once was nationalized in order to build up communism is now privatized in order to build up capitalism; and in an ironic twist the Northern Ireland murals are now state sponsored and commissioned; that is to say property in these markets reveals itself as a product of state planning. It emerges from these developments that the murals of Northern Ireland (those painted under the Re-Imaging Communities Programme) and the Early Bourgeois mural can be seen as a kind of state artistic installation.

Notes

The Agreement provides that change in the national status of Northern Ireland may not take place without the consent of the majority in the region. It also provides for a devolved government of Northern Ireland thus returning executive power to the region. Birthright entitles all people of Northern Ireland to Citizenship. Citizens may identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, as they may choose. As a result Unionists have gained more executive power than they previously enjoyed. Delivering peace to the region was thus partly bound to giving it a form of dual nationality.

Northern Ireland, which is one of the four countries of the United Kingdom, is often referred to as the 'six counties' by many of its political movements and by many of its communities that do not accept it as a legitimately constituted state. The six counties are six of the nine counties of Ulster province which prior to partition had been one of the four provinces of Ireland made up in all of 32 counties. Four of the six Ulster counties have a Unionist (protestant) majority, while the remaining two have a Nationalist (catholic) majority. The partition of Ireland brought about the formation of the Republic of Ireland comprised of the remaining three counties of Ulster the provinces of Leinster, Munster and Connacht (having 23 counties) making up its 26 counties. The Republic is sometimes referred to as the 26 counties by those same groups in deference to the perception that the partitioned Ireland will inevitably achieve self determination as one nation of 32 counties. The ruling majority of Northern Ireland sometimes refer to themselves as Ulster Scots in confirmation of their perceived Irish-Britishness committed to maintaining and strengthening political and cultural ties with Great Britain and, even more so, Northern Ireland is sometimes referred to as a province (of Great Britain) rather than a country by many of the ruling class who perceive themselves to be the last remaining 'true Brits'. As far as the republicans were concerned the division of Ireland was particularly invidious because the new border secured an overall Unionist majority in the north with as much territory as possible.

CHAPTER ONE

The Mural entitled Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany

The GDR's Marxist based Historical Discipline in opposition to a Western based Bourgeois Variant.

Academic Research

The Commission for the Production of the mural entitled Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany.

The terms of Reference

The Scholarly Concept

The Artistic Concept

Social Realism; Immersion and Representation; a Panorama

The Balance of Power – Art as Propaganda

Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany

— A mural commissioned by the German Federal Republic and painted between 1976 and 1987 located in the Panorama Museum Bad Frankenhausen, Germany.

Most contemporary accounts of the mural entitled Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany have brought the subject from the particular to the universal, that is to say from the pre-modern closed community of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), its orders, hierarchies, traditions and cultural identities toward an open space of universality and citizenship in a democratic modern German Federal Republic. These mediating transformations focus on its symbolic content which is then analyzed. In doing so an authorial intention has been ascribed to the painter. The Panorama director Gerd Linder speaking at the Panorama Conference in Lucerne has contextualized the mural as follows:

> By withdrawing to a purely aesthetic position, the artist assured himself in the end, while still accepting the thematic and conceptual dictates characteristic of a 'consensus dictatorship', such as existed in East Germany, a high degree of artistic freedom in executing the commission – and thus, in the final thematic form as well, Tübke distanced himself not only from any ideological responsibility but also from the original desire of his client to create a Peasant War memorial with a traditional, primarily historical panorama." [7]

The curator here characterizes the work with autonomous meaning which will manifest in front of the viewers eyes. In terms of this formulation the material forces, those relationships between the social, material and ideological conditions determining the phenomena under the GDR regime are set aside as bureaucratic and technical. On the other hand, its imagery which harkens back to Reformation iconography and hence which predates the seemingly monotonous communist regime, gives the impression that the mural is a direct throwback to the sixteenth century—it looks diverse and different within the framework of the taste for heterogeneity. The process of curating has here cured any powerlessness in the mural or incapacity to present itself by revealing it as a healthy and powerful

[7] The talk is entitled: The Purloined Contract: On the Development of the Conception for the Frankenhausen Panorama; it is available on line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the_contract.html retrieved 03/03/09.

iconophilic image in itself. This curatorial practice suggests that when we look at the mural we will directly and instantaneously confront 'art'. The famous distinction between art and non art is generally understood as a distinction between objects inhabited by art and those from which art is absent. But at the same time this practice undermines art itself because the curatorial intrusion cannot remain concealed and remains iconoclastic even as it is programmatically iconophile.

In his *Dissemination*, Derrida has already demonstrated that the "pharmakon" or supplement cures even as it makes unwell (*Plato's Pharmacy*, in *Dissemination*, 1981). It is no coincidence that the word "curator" is etymologically related to the word "cure". Thus by involving the mural in a specific narrative the curator is unwittingly making an iconoclastic gesture that returns the mural to history, its transformation from the autonomous artwork to an illustration whose value is not contained within itself but is extrinsic, attached to it by a historical narrative. As Boris Groys states in his *Art Power* it is not possible in the contemporary period for artworks to become iconic as a result of their display in a museum; it is their circulation in the art market and mass media where they are perceived as such (Groys, 2008: p. 47).

The historical narrative attached to the mural is not purely one which puts the mural to the task of illustrating a certain period or kind of art history but necessarily entails a consideration of the conditions of production and consumption which account for the mural's origins. Of course such an enquiry would clearly be insufficient were it not to account for the mural's aesthetic specificity, which on one hand is a dense and complex semiological system saturated with allegory and deferred meaning and on the other is both an uncomplicated indexical mode of signs and a theatric encounter with which it startles its audience. This constituent ambiguity shifts interpretation indeterminately between functions of ideological complexes and logonomic systems; it is therefore subject to contradiction and mediation. And this means that given political and social transformations in Germany its meanings are malleable. Benjamin conceives of this possibility with his notion of aura; poststructuralist critical thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault are well-known for their problematization of essentialist theories of signification, particularly logocentrism and extended discourse. It is this balancing of power rather than the organization of the artistic material and devices which will bring the recipient of the Early Bourgeois mural to adopt a new way of seeing.

Fig. 12 Bad Frankenhausen Museum

The foundation stone of the main building of the panorama was laid on the 8th May 1974. On the 15th May 1975, 450 years to the day since the battle occurred, a topping out ceremony took place on the completion of the main building, a rotunda, with a height of 17.85m and an external diameter of 43.72 m. The structure is made of 54 cylindrical concrete shells and cantilevered shell roof elements designed by the architect Herbert Müller. The building was designed by the East German state owned planning company from Quedlinburg and built by the state owned VEB Wohungsbaukombinat, Halle. The canvas, measuring 14 x 123 sq m, (1722sq.m.) woven by the Soviet textile company Textilkombinat Sursk, arrived in Bad Frankenhausen in the summer of 1978. Günter Hohlstamm a local upholsterer sewed together the two ends of the canvas. He also prepared the long sides for hanging. In May 1982, fifty four men hoisted the 1.1 tonne canvas and secured it with 576 metal clamps to the 40 metre diameter upper steel ring. The equally large lower ring was used to tighten the canvas. In November and December 1982 a soviet specialist team primed the canvas with secret recipes from ancient Russian icons. The common property of its production outside the art market is evident. Thus to speak in traditional Marxist terms the mural makes it possible for the viewer to reflect not only on the superstructure—the skill and aesthetic value of GDR art, but also on the base or substructure of common labour.

The gigantic Panorama Museum is an imposing signifier which towers over the surrounding countryside. The solid building and the kaleidoscopic illusionary painting attached to its inner walls

together generate possible connotations directly as a single material signifier. On the 16th October 1987, Werner Tübke signed his painting, which was then ceremoniously handed over to the Minister of Culture of the GDR. During 1988 and 1989 final structural, technical and organizational modifications to the building complex, were made, including safe guarding the painting from the effects of temperature change and installing the best possible lighting system. On the 14th September 1989 the Peasants War Panorama was ceremoniously opened to the public. This occurred just eight weeks before the fall of the Berlin Wall on the 9th November 1989 and the transference of political power from the GDR to the Federal Republic of Germany.

A number of modal auxiliaries present themselves in reaction to these performative acts, in the sense of which Derrida writes. The mural was intended to form a significant part of a repertoire of signs upon which the people could draw in developing and maintaining their sense of nationhood and revolutionary heritage but the performatives of signature, event and context aimed at guarantee fail to provide a singular assurance of meaning not least of which is uncertainty over the authorship of the mural. Indecisive interpretations in official and scholarly quarters regarding the roles played by Thomas Müntzer, Martin Luther, the peasants and the Reformation itself in the history of the class struggle had resulted in a failure to strictly schemetize the project. The building of the museum had neared completion long before the authorities were able to agree on the format and content of the desired painting resulting in a rushed and nebulous commission document. One result was the opportunity for the painter, Werner Tübke to fulfil the broad objective of the commission within his own creative discretion. Thus badly managed bureaucracy also contributed its pen to the intellectual (in Gramsci's usage) framing of authorship. And the collective property and production of and by the citizenry of the nation state should also be read in the signature of Tübke. Yet despite these slippages the political grounding of the painting interlocked it and its museum home into the ideology of the collective revolutionary heritage and its status as an iconic convention of the culmination of Marxist revolution within the specificity of the East German state was assured to take hold through practice and the authority of the power of the politburo had Germany not been reunified shortly thereafter.

The GDR's Marxist based Historical Discipline in opposition to a Western based Bourgeois Variant.

The battle on the Schlachtberg is a primal scene of the German bourgeois revolution; it was not simply that the battle had occurred there or that it was effectively the last and largest of the battles of the peasant wars. Of greater significance to the GDR was a historiography premised on the discourse of revolutionary class struggle. This formulation is consistent with history, understood in Marxist terms as a history of class struggle culminating in a command economy of universal common property. The geographical importance of the site and by extension the geographical boundaries of the state was thus conjoined to the peasant wars as a site of struggle for the authority of this discourse. With the abolition of private property and the transference of every individual's heritage into the collective property, the state no longer moved progressively toward the future but was already situated in the future. The victory of its political project as a nation state was thus signalled by an ultimate rejection of the past, a final rupture with the history of diversity. For this nation state, however, a communist community that had come into existence through partition and not revolution as had happened in Russia with the October revolution, this leap was made possible by looking at the world through a prism of nationalism in the sense of a distinct and separate nation state from the remainder of Germany. Identity, the politics of difference was not an issue because identity was firmly embedded in the class struggle and the internationalism of the communist community.

The identity built on this premise is fundamentally a radical aesthetic sensibility for the political situating itself in homogeneity and universalism at the opposite end of diversity and difference. All other identity is subsumed in the collective property. For example a central figure in the Bad Frankenhausen mural is the figurative representation of Thomas Müntzer who had been the subject of study since Engels. In its search to construct a viable, Marxist based historical discipline that was distinct from and in opposition to its western 'bourgeois' variant, Engel's 1859 study *The Peasant War in Germany* in which Engels wrote the history of the war from the perspective of historical materialism acquired a special status. During the 1950s the Russian historian, Moses Smirin produced an influential study of Müntzer and the 'People's Reformation', which remained close to that of Engels, both of whom perceived in Müntzer the revolutionary impulse of the common people; that is to say he does not represent the pluralistic individualism of bourgeois liberalism but an ascetic universalism.[8]

This emphasis on the mediation of reality is not relative—the reality is not regarded as good as any other. But the materiality of the signifier museum/mural at once both cements and limits, hence

[8] For an English summary of Smirin's work, see Abraham Friesen, *Reformation and Utopia. The Marxist Interpretation of the Reformation and its Antecedents* (Wiesbaden 1974), 182–6.

naturalizes the meaning of its signs to a discourse which privileges the German Peasant Wars and the priest Thomas Müntzer as the German people's first radical attempt to transform society. Roland Barthes has shown how signs do not merely reflect (social) reality but are involved in its construction (Barthes, 1977). This reality construction as a 'site of struggle', pivots on a review of the Reformation as a religious phenomenon that the pioneer of Marxism, Frederick Engels introduced in his 1859 study. On the contrary, he argued, the force behind the16th century peasant wars was that of a clash of interests between the classes which took place in the context of the discursive power of theology:

> Even the so-called religious wars of the Sixteenth Century, involved positive material class-interests; those wars were class wars, too, just as the later internal collisions in England and France. Although the class struggles of that day were clothed in religious shibboleths, and through the interests, requirements and demands of the various classes were concealed behind a religious screen, this changed nothing and is easily explained by the conditions of the time.
>
> — (Engels, 1969: pp. 41-42)

His analysis of the 'conditions of the time' drew attention to the discursive sources of power in the hands of the clergy. The dogmas of the church were at one and the same time, political and legal axioms; biblical quotations had the validity of law in every court. Even after the formation of a special class of jurists, jurisprudence remained under the tutelage of theology. The dominance of theology in intellectual activities was at the same time a logical consequence of the church as the most general force coordinating and sanctioning existing feudal domination. Under such conditions, all general and overt attacks on feudalism, he argued, in the first place attacks on the church, all revolutionary, social and political doctrines, necessarily became theological heresies. Hence, in order to be attacked, existing social conditions had to be stripped of their 'halo of sanctity' (Engels, 1969: p. 42) so that revolutionary acts took the forms peculiar to its conditions, mysticism, as open heresy, or of armed insurrection. Much later, writing during the 1960's in regard to the separation of the possible from the permitted in contemporary society, Guy Debord echoes Engels assessment of power during the middle ages, when he writes in his *Society of the Spectacle* that by comparison with the modern epoch , "religion (of that time) justified the cosmic and ontological order that corresponded to the interests of the masters, expounding and embellishing everything that societies (of that time) could not deliver. . .this universal devotion to fixed religious imagery was only a shared acknowledgement of loss, an imaginary compensation for the poverty of a concrete social activity " (Debord, 2009: p. 30).

The struggle, emphasized in Engels study, is that of the peasants' struggle against the feudal landlords, a struggle not against religion but against the hardship of the conditions of their lives imposed by feudal power, that is to say the beginning of class consciousness. He drew attention to these conditions at length:

> At the bottom of all the classes, save the last one, was the exploited bulk of the nation, the peasants. It was the peasant who supported the other strata of society: princes, officials, nobility, clergy, patricians and middle-class. No matter whose subject the peasant was—a prince's, an imperial baron's, a bishop's, a monastery's or a town's—he was treated by all as a thing, a beast of burden, and worse. If he was a serf, he was entirely at the mercy of his master. If he was a bondsman, the legal levies stipulated in the agreement were sufficient to crush him; and yet they were daily increased. He had to work on his lords' estate most of his time; out of what he earned in his few free hours, he had to pay tithes, dues, ground rents, road (war) imposts, and local and imperial taxes. He could neither marry nor die without paying the lord. Beside his statute labour he had to gather litter, pick strawberries and bilberries, collect snail-shells, drive the game in the hunt, and chop wood, etc., for his lord. The right to fish and hunt belonged to the master; the peasant had to stand quietly by and watch his crop destroyed by wild game. The common pastures and woods of the peasants were almost everywhere forcibly appropriated by the lord. The lord reigned as he pleased over the peasants own person, over his wife and daughter, just as he reigned over his property. He had the right of the first night. He threw the peasant into the tower whenever he saw fit, and the rack awaited the peasant there just as surely as the investigating attorney waits for the arrested in our day. He killed the peasant, or had him beheaded, whenever he pleased. There was no instructive chapter of the Carolina regarding " ear clipping," " nose cutting," "eye gouging," "chopping of fingers and hands," "beheading," "breaking on the wheel," "burning," "hot irons," "quartering," etc., that the gracious lord and patron would not apply at will. Who would defend the peasant? It was barons, clergymen, patricians, or jurists who sat in the courts and they knew very well for what they were being paid for. All the official Estates of the Empire, after all, lived by squeezing dry the peasants".
>
> — (Engels, 1969: p39.)

But the war did not benefit the peasants and nor as one might have expected did the clergy derive benefit. As Engels declared, "the most magnificent revolutionary effort of the German people ended in ignominious defeat . . . in redoubled oppression" (Engels, 1969: p. 125). Engels points out that as a class

the clergy sustained a loss of wealth and power. Its monasteries and endowments were burned, its treasures plundered; it was everywhere least capable of resistance and yet, Engels notes it was the main target of the people's wrath. However, most significantly, the princes (the aristocratic class of landowners class that accumulated wealth through taxes, currency operations, credit and financial skullduggery) alone gained from the Peasant War. Engels states: "They gained not only relatively, through the weakening of their opponents—the clergy, nobility and the towns, but also absolutely, in that they carried off the *spolia opima* (the main spoils) of all the other Estates. The church estates were secularized in their favour; part of the nobility, fully or partly ruined, was obliged gradually to accept vassalage; the indemnities of the town's and peasant communities swelled their treasuries, and, furthermore, the abolition of so many town privileges now gave much greater play to their favourite financial operations" (Engels, 1969: p. 128).

These studied observations of the defeat of the peasants and clergy are carried forward in the mural. For example the mural incorporates the emblematic freedom flag carried by the peasants during the peasant wars. In his study, Engels had incorporated a woodcut of the freedom flag and in that reproduction a peasant bearing the flag boldly walks forward; the mural strengthens this sign by submerging the flag in the turmoil of battle with the feudal lords—a battle that both the peasants and their clergyman leader, Müntzer will lose.

Fig. 13 Woodcut / Revolutionary Peasant with Banner (Engels, 1969: p. 25)

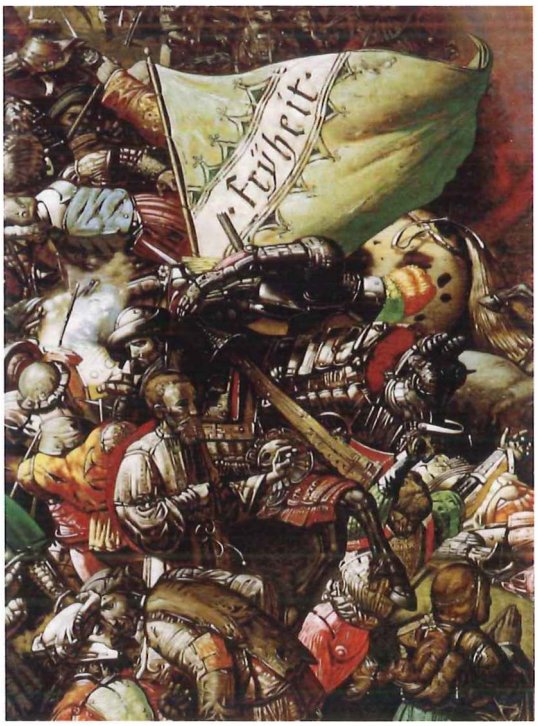


Fig. 14 Detail - *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

The Peasant War thus had special significance for the return to common ownership under the GDR and was employed to endorse specific state policies, especially those concerning agrarian matters. Edwin Hoernle, head of the Agriculture and Forestry Administration, justified the Regime's policy of land reform and the formation of collective farms by making references to early modern history. He claimed that, as far back as 1525, the Thuringian peasants, led by their radical priest Thomas Müntzer, had fought against large-scale landed property ownership by the ruling classes. According to Hoernle and other high-ranking state bureaucrats, the freedom from servitude that was sought by Müntzer and his peasant rebels was successfully accomplished for the first time in Germany's new Workers and Peasants' State. For the GDR the Reformation was not an isolated theological struggle but a dynamic class conflict that transferred to the present through a process of historical dialectics.

We see therefore that the thousand year old town of Bad Frankenhausen, located in the state of Thuringia in the Kyffhäuserkreis district of Germany is a site of particularly significant tension between state and private ownership. Thuringia, known as the 'green heart' of Germany, in reference to its agricultural wealth, is the source of German conflict over the distribution of capital produced by Thuringian labour. In Marxist terms the materiality of this foundational conflict is embedded in context and is tensed to the revolutionary tradition. The Early Bourgeois mural is itself an index of intellectual production; thus material and intellectual production is dialectically interlocked with class struggle.

Academic Research

The Reformation, the Peasant Wars and persons who figured in this context such as Müntzer and Luther, constituted an important narrative that transmitted information about the dialectical origins, meaning and collective heritage of the East German nation state. However, providing a visual signifier for notions of a nation state is a dilemma that pits illustration against iconoclasm. Most often art has attempted to represent the greatest possible power, the power that rules the world in all its totality—whether divine or natural power. These elements emerge in the Early Bourgeois mural whose thematic impulse is coded by art as representation; a code which has traditionally drawn its own authority from this power. Drawing on a mixture of connotative, denotative and indexical signs, it carefully avoids illustration In this sense the mural has been directly or indirectly critical because it confronts finite, political power with images of the infinite – God, nature, fate, life, death.

The dilemma underwriting the Early Bourgeois mural can be explained by a comparison with the graphic figurative iconography of the massive Borodino mural housed in a rotunda in the USSR which provided the inspiration for the commission of the mural. This mural is an illustration of a battle fought

between the French troops of Napoleon and the Russian army under the command of Field Marshall Maikhail Kutuzov. The illustrative explanation of a single battle scene contrasts with the Early Bourgeois mural's multiplicity of thematic material of which the specificity of battle is but one the Borodino mural has a feel of instant reality about it; the Early Bourgeois mural on the other hand stands for something else.

Fig. 15 127 x 202 oil on canvas detail of the Battle of Borodino - Borodino Museum

Fig. 16 Battle Scene -*Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

The gigantic panoramic Early Bourgeois painting combines a number of artistic styles, such as late-medieval German as well as Mannerism, and relies on an imaginative use of historical visual sources, such as the woodcut illustrations found in sixteenth century broadsheet pamphlets. The influence of artists such as Dürer, Cranach, the Beham Brothers, Brueghel and El Greco can be detected. The painting is suffused with a myriad of late-medieval symbols, allusions, allegories and Christian iconography. It portrays the battle together with a multitude of symbolic, allegorical and dramatic scenes set mostly in the sixteenth century but on occasion reaching back to the creation of the world. The representations are conveyed in fine detail, but the medium of this massive canvas and the spread that it necessarily involves confuses the mind in tracking down the detail. It was Leibniz who pointed out that the mind becomes confused by a conglomeration of detail that is not formulated in concepts capable of accommodating detail as a part concept. By way of contrast the Borodino mural of about the same dimensions spreads a single theme across a wide view.

But the confusion in the viewers mind when confronted with the early Bourgeois mural is not limited to the physical problems that emerge when absorbing a kaleidoscopic multitude of themes on a huge canvas. The origin of the mural is interlinked with a number of scholarly interpretations of the Reformation, occasionally at odds with one another and often swayed by political mediations, which rested on a theory of Early Bourgeois revolution in Germany strongly influenced by Marxist thought. Among the earliest to apply theory to the study of the Reformation was Frederick Engels, who tied the event to the social, political and economic conditions of the day, introducing new categories to the debate, including questions relating to class, revolutionary groupings and the different levels of reception. A third specificity of Marxist criticism may be identified here and added to those of material production and class struggle, namely a Marxist-Leninist imperative of commitment to the theory and practice of political revolution; and it is this critique that marked the debate in the GDR over the role of Müntzer, Luther and the Reformation itself. At the same time that Müntzer was perceived to embody the revolutionary spirit, Luther the historical personality who had unleashed the Reformation movement received little attention. After all, Luther had savagely condemned the peasant rebels in his pamphlet '*Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*' published in May 1525 crying out that the peasants should be "knocked to pieces, strangled and stabbed, covertly and overtly by everyone who can, just as one might kill a mad dog" (cited in Engels, 1969: pp. 51-52).

> Therefore let everyone who can, smite, slay, and stab, secretly or openly, remembering that nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful, or devilish than a rebel ... For baptism does not make men free in body and property, but in soul; and the gospel does not make goods common, except in the

> case o f those who, of their own free will, do what the apostles and disciples did in Acts 4 [:32–37]. They did not demand, as do our insane peasants in their raging, that the goods of others—of Pilate and Herod should be common, but only their own goods. Our peasants, however, want to make the goods of other men common, and keep their own for themselves. Fine Christians they are! I think there is not a devil left in hell; they have all gone into the peasants. Their raving has gone beyond all measure.
>
> (Martin Luther cited in Pelikan, Vol. 46: pp. 50-51)

However, at an earlier time Luther had expressed his support for the rebellion. He wrote, for instance, "It is not the peasants who arose against you masters, but God himself, who wishes to punish you for your evil doings," (Engels, 1969: p. 51) hoping to find in the peasant movement a support for his struggle against Rome and the Catholic church. But seeing himself possibly isolated and perhaps "piked as a traitor" (Engels, 1969: p. 51), he joined hands with the noble, prince and clergy in condemning the peasants. He came to justify his opposition to the rebels on a number of doctrinaire grounds. Michael Mullett notes that recourse was had to the writings of St Paul. St. Paul had written in his epistle to the Romans 13:1-7 that all authorities are appointed by God and therefore should not be resisted. This reference from the Bible forms the foundation for the doctrine known in the German case, as the divine right of the princes (Mullett, 2004). Engels has already demonstrated that biblical quotations formed the basis of law at that time (ibid). Without his backing for the uprising, many rebels laid down their weapons; others felt betrayed. Their defeat by the Swabian League at the Battle of Frankenhausen on the 15th May 1525, followed by Müntzer's execution, brought the revolutionary stage of the Reformation to a close. Thereafter, notes Mullett, radicalism found a refuge in the Anabaptist movement and other sects, while Luther's Reformation flourished under the wing of the secular powers. Be that as it may, it was the iconoclastic anger of Luther who was instrumental in replacing the dominance of catholicism with a protestant interpretation of Christianity and whose nascent activism contradicted notions of fatalism, (Mullett) that implicated him in the Marxist assertion adopted in the GDR that revolutionaries must organize social change.

Signifiers of the ironic sign of Luther's conflictual perspective emerge in the mural. For instance he is shown at the fountain to the forefront of the mural in the company of artists and intellectuals of the time – Dürer, Cranach the elder, Capernicus, Brandt, Erasmus and a number of others. But in a darker space in the upper region of the mural we see Luther with two faces. The one looks towards the public burning of books resonating with his condemnation of the catholic codex. The other looks towards St Anthony, the saint who was tempted to abandon the true faith. The involvement in the mural of the

rhetoric of irony in helping to shape the reality of the East German nation state did not apply to Luther alone; Müntzer and the Reformation itself became immersed in contradiction.

Fig. 17 Martin Luther at the Fountain - *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

Fig. 18 Martin Luther with two faces - *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

The most influential historical work during the 1950's in regard to the peasant war was produced by the Russian historian, Moses Smirin. At first the popular sovereignty Smirin had given to Müntzer as the great champion of the masses, superior to his communist followers by reason of his revolutionary and combative energy and his statesmanlike mind followed Engels who argued that in the revolutionary movement of the 16th century, Martin Luther was a middle class reformist and the representative of the coalition of the middle-class and the nobility, who personified the forces of counter-revolution and who compared unfavourably to the plebian revolutionary Thomas Müntzer. As Müntzer's theology reached far beyond the current conceptions of his time, so his political doctrine went beyond existing social and political conditions. Müntzer was perceived as the embodied revolutionary impulse of the common people.

However, in later studies Engels shifted emphasis from the individual protagonists of the middle ages to a broader focus on the Reformation era. In these studies he characterized the German Reformation

as the first in a series of revolutionary attempts, culminating in the French Revolution of 1789, in which Europe's bourgeoisie aimed to throw off the shackles of feudalism and transform society along capitalist lines. These ideas formed the basis of a broader theme within East German scholarly interests during the early 1960's: that is the revolutionary significance of the Reformation rather than a narrow view of Müntzer and the peasant war. [1] The incorporation of these ideas into official GDR government policy was confirmed at the 1960 Wernigerode Conference, where the main issues for discussion were the thirty-four theses proposed by Max Steinmetz,[2] a leading medievalist. He argued that the events between 1476 and 1535 constituted an early bourgeois revolution and that its two essential components were the Reformation and the Peasant War:

> The first great action of the rising bourgeoisie (as per Engels) in Germany reached its highpoint in the Reformation and Peasant War (1517–25), the most significant revolutionary mass movement of the German people until the November revolution of 1918 . . . The Reformation and Peasant War as the kernel and highpoint of the early bourgeois revolution in Germany, from the posting of the Theses in Wittenberg to the defeat of most of the peasant armies in 1525/6.
>
> — Scribner and Benecke, 1979: pp. 9/10.

For Steinmetz, Luther's attack on the clergy's sale of 'indulgences' signalled the commencement of the revolution, because it created a national movement that unified class consciousness. The Peasant War became the climax of the struggle: in1525 the popular masses waged an offensive against the rulers of the feudal princely states. Finally, Steinmetz suggested that Müntzer's attempt to establish popular sovereignty a people's Reformation constituted the most mature political expression of the revolutionary movement. While Steinmetz still gave prominence to Müntzer and the Peasant War and did not deviate from Smirin's paradigm, he included and acknowledged the contribution of Martin Luther's Reformation to the revolutionary process. Steinmetz suggested that the Reformation was an essential component of the early bourgeois revolution and was inextricably linked to the Peasant War. This helped to widen Marxist historical perspectives in which historians began to pay greater attention to the Lutheran movement.

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[1] Robert Walinski-Kiehl has written an informative and thoroughly researched article titled *Reformation History and Political Mythology in the German Democratic Republic 1948-89*(RWK) to which much of the descriptive material that follows is indebted. See European History Quarterly 2004; 34; 43. An on line version can be found at http://ehq.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/34/1/43 retrieved 17/07/09.

[2] An English translation of Steinmetz's *Theses* can be found in Scribner and Benecke, 1979: pp. 9–18.

The mural makes direct reference to Steinmetz's notion of Luther's attack on the sale of indulges in a metaphorical image that signals the final demise of the ability of the papacy to mediate social arrangements. The specificity of this imagery is accordingly intertwined with Steinmetz's *Theses* that corresponded closely to the teleological historical assumptions of Marxism with its emphasis on class conflict as the motivating force, and revolutions as the locomotives of historical development. We see here the hanged cleric – the seller of Indulgences - alongside the hanging Papacy represented by a hanged devil wearing the papal crown. Luther's influence on this event is referenced in the two faced Luther located a short distance above the hanging. The authority of this iconography is enhanced by the derivation of the representation of the devil from a woodcut by Matthias Gerung of around 1544-1588 (circa) showing Catholic clergy revelling at an orgy; clerics and prostitutes drinking and playing games at a table and a flying devil holding the papal crown above a priest.

Fig. 19 Detail / the Papacy and the Seller of Indulgences
– *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

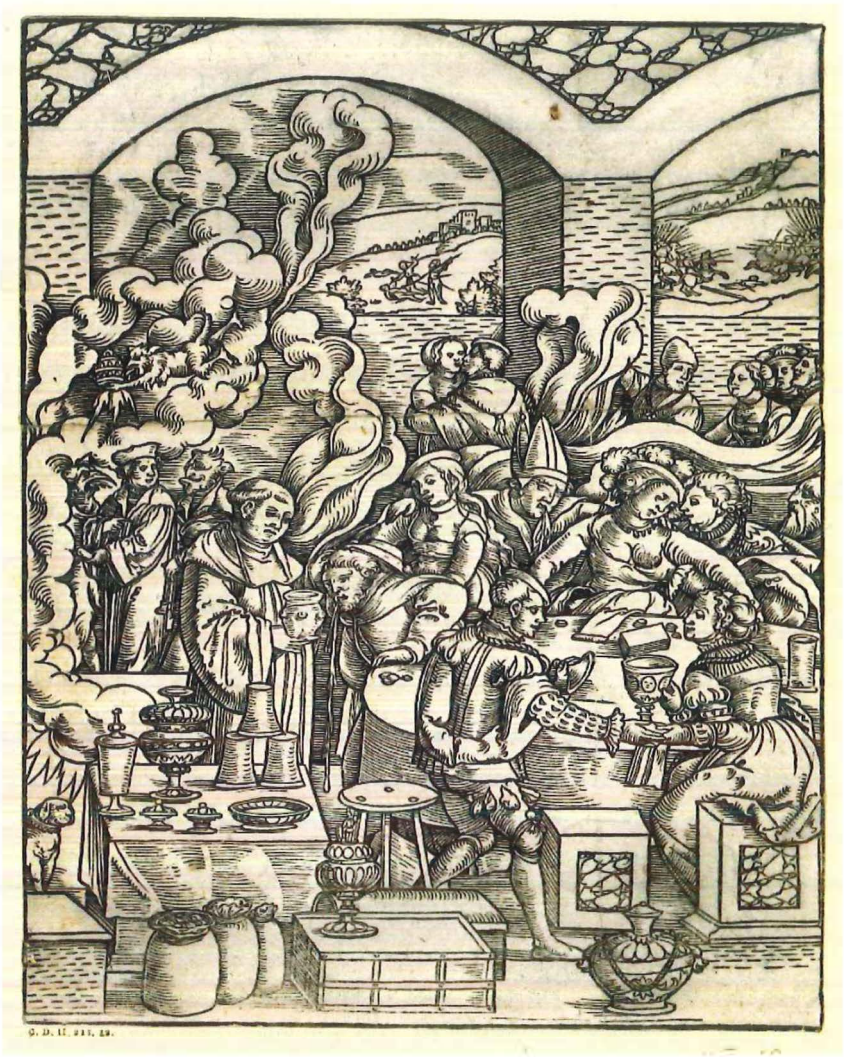

Fig. 20 Woodcut by Matthias Gerung 1544-1588 (circa)

A battle being waged during the peasant war is discernable through the arches in this woodcut. This representation adds credibility to Engel's proposition that the peasant war was a material struggle between the peasants and the feudal princes and landowners, the clerics having become a hedonistic spent force. The war as he pointed out was conducted under the cloth of the conditions of the time.

The notion of early bourgeois revolution also gave pride of place to Germany as the first country to have experienced this type of Marxist transformation—something that a German communist state could only view with great pride and satisfaction. And the early bourgeois revolution thesis helped to define systematically a Marxist, materialist approach to history that was distinct from the bourgeois interpretations that were dominant among its Western rivals in the Federal Republic. The *Theses* was thus a strategic component in the context of East-West German relations and the subsequent articulation of a

clear, precise East German nationality. The Federal Republic which refused to recognize the legitimacy of the GDR actively encouraged its isolation and enforced the so called 'Hallstein' doctrine.[3] However, after 1969 Chancellor Willie Brandt of the Federal Republic encouraged German reunification through dialogue and negotiation. Consequently the Federal Government recognized the GDR *de facto*. Following on these developments, the Hallstein doctrine became obsolete and was abolished around 1970. This recognition helped to enforce the East German territorial and historical claims within East Germany as the first socialist state on German soil. During August 1961 the GDR sealed its borders and began construction on the Berlin Wall. While a climate of repression initially prevailed, from the mid 1960's a broadening of the political atmosphere influenced writings on Reformation history especially assessments of Martin Luther; he began to be viewed in a more positive light. Walinski-Kiehl observes that Luther's rehabilitation was closely connected to the regime's growing desire to incorporate individuals from Germany's past into its own distinctive historical lineage. Luther, the reactionary and princes' lackey, does appear an unlikely choice of candidate for inclusion in the GDR's 'Hall of Fame'. However, at the Wernigerode Conference, Steinmetz had acknowledged the reformer's role as the instigator of the early bourgeois revolution; Luther had accomplished this by undertaking the dramatic act of posting his theses against Indulgences and criticizing the papacy (RWK: p. 51).

Walinski-Kiehl suggests that the 450th anniversary of the German Reformation in 1967 provided the state with an ideal opportunity to integrate Luther into its revolutionary tradition. Gerhard Zschäbitz's biography of Luther, which was produced to coincide with the Reformation Jubilee, offered a far more positive and rounded assessment of the reformer than that of previous Marxist scholars such as Smirin. Zschäbitz portrayed Luther as a representative of the educated bourgeoisie who acted within the constraints of his age, displaying both conservative and progressive attitudes. Not only did the reformer's rehabilitation help to enhance the GDR's historical prestige, but it also served a more pragmatic political purpose: the reconciliation of the substantial Christian Lutheran community with the secular, Marxist state.[4] During the 1983 celebrations to mark the quincentennial anniversary of Luther's birth First Secretary Erich Honecker described Luther as 'one of the greatest sons of the German people' (RWK: p. 53) and 'one of the most significant humanists who strove for a better world' (Goeckel, 1990 cited in

[3] Named after Walter Hallstein, State Secretary of the foreign office it was a key doctrine in the foreign policy of the Federal Republic; it provided that the Federal Republic would not establish or maintain diplomatic relations with any state that recognized the GDR.

[4] For state–church relations in the GDR, see Goeckel, Robert F. *The Lutheran Church and the East German State. Political Conflict and Change Under Ulbricht and Honecker* Ithaca, NY. 1990. The notion developed of 'the Church within Socialism' whose main purpose was to serve society and not work against the Marxist regime. A harmonious relationship developed between state and church. Millions of *Ostmarks* were spent on renovating the main buildings associated with the Reformation, in order to further East Germany's cultural prestige.

RWK, p.53). This was a far cry from the 1950s Marxist assessment of Luther as class traitor and coward. Luther was not the only famous German historical figure to be co-opted into the service of the GDR's progressive cultural tradition. Goethe was given similar accolades to Luther, and was also recruited into East Germany's humanist heritage. Honecker described him in an almost identical manner to Luther as 'the brave champion of a militant humanism, for a just and enlightened social order' (RWK: p. 53).

During the celebrations the East Berlin historian Gerhard Brendler played a key role in the mediation of the Luther myth to the public. He produced a detailed Luther biography that stressed that Luther was motivated by a genuine religious impulse and he produced a 'theological revolution' which was the first radical challenge to the feudal church's hegemony. Brendler was also one of the authors of a series of fifteen 'Theses Concerning Martin Luther', aimed at articulating the GDR's assessment of the reformer to a wide audience. These works situate Luther in the GDR's progressive tradition, placing stress on his contributions to issues such as education and welfare:

> In the social sphere Luther's activity was directed chiefly towards providing for teachers, clergymen, vergers and the universities, and dealing with the question of the beggars and the poor. The appropriation of ecclesiastical and monastic lands was seen as a way of achieving these aims . . . The reformation also had a significant influence on the development of formal education. Luther himself stimulated the growth of elementary schools . . . Luther also stimulated the development of a humane social ethic [sic] by drawing attention to the obligation to serve one's fellow-men, the urge to engage in productive and purposeful work, the necessity to abolish the exploitation of human labour for profit, the need to preserve and protect the family, and the indispensability of virtues such as diligence, industry, thrift and a sense of duty.
>
> — (Cited in RWK pp. 53-54).

The final sentence suggested that, by the early sixteenth century, Luther had already prescribed all the essential qualities required of East German citizens. Only marginal reference was made in Thesis Six to politically sensitive issues such as Luther's condemnation of the peasant rebellion.

However, as Walinski-Kiehl notes the regime did not overlook Müntzer in the years following the construction of the Wall. He was specifically celebrated in 1975 during the 450th anniversary commemoration of the German Peasants War. As a tribute to the revolutionary leader of the sixteenth-century common people, the city of Mühlhausen, where Müntzer had resided during the rebellion and created his radical 'Eternal Council', was renamed Mühlhausen Thomas-Müntzer-Town. A Peasant War museum and memorial were also opened in the town on 14 March 1975. The museum contained weapons,

models and documents associated with 1525. Significantly, it was housed in a former church, the *Kornmarktkirche*, where citizens could make a secular rather than a religious pilgrimage to learn more about one of their country's greatest heroes. This building seemed a particularly suitable location, for it was rumoured that ammunition for the peasant rebels had been cast from the church's melted-down bronze bells.

In December 1972 the Basic Treaty was signed, improving communications with the Federal Republic, and in September 1973 the GDR became a full member of the United Nations. The 1975 Peasant War celebrations occurred in the more relaxed, open political climate that also marked the subsequent 1983 Luther anniversary. The 1975 Peasant War celebrations provided the first real opportunity for some kind of scholarly dialogue to be established between East and West, and clearly marked the end of the GDR's academic isolation. A more open political climate continued throughout much of the 1980s, as East–West German relations were rapidly normalized. An exchange of ideas occurred between East and West German historians and academics. Some historians from the Federal Republic, such as Peter Blickle, demonstrated that they were receptive to East German notions. Unlike most of his West German colleagues, who were reluctant to consider a socio-economic perspective because of its association with Marxism, Blickle explored issues that had been explored primarily by Marxists, such as the question of the possible connections between Reformation religion and popular revolt in an endeavour to bridge the gap between the rival interpretations.

During the late 1980s, significant tensions can be discerned between the doctrinaire political orthodox views demanded by the GDR's party élite, and the historical interpretations of those scholars influenced by less rigid, Western approaches. This was most apparent during the 1989 quincentennial Thomas Müntzer celebrations when, in some historians' interpretations, the radical priest's status as revolutionary hero and progressive socialist began to be revised. Professor Adolf Laube emphasized that Müntzer was a 'genuine theologian' and preacher'. Laube went on to argue that, at the beginning of his career, the basis of Müntzer's thought and personal programme had been religious rather than political and that, like Luther, he was concerned to find the right way to correct faith. It was only much later, at the height of the Peasant War in April 1525 that Müntzer proposed that the common people should resort to force against the ungodly authorities. Similar views were expressed by Vogler, who argued in his biographical study of the radical priest that Müntzer's primary objectives were concerned with theology, rather than social liberation. These interpretations were far closer to those conventional Western approaches that had regarded Müntzer as a religious visionary rather than a social revolutionary. Paradoxically, by 1989, many East-German Marxists were focusing more on the theological aspects of sixteenth-century history, while their counterparts in the 'bourgeois' West were increasingly

concentrating on the Reformation's sociological and economic dimensions. However, although significant changes had occurred by 1989 in the GDR's evaluation of Müntzer, assessments of Müntzer as a central protagonist of East Germany's revolutionary tradition in keeping with the writings of Engels and of Smirin had not been completely renounced. Official policy was embodied in its fourteen 'Theses Concerning Thomas Müntzer', which not only focused on Müntzer's revolutionary spirit but drew a direct link from the class struggle he spearheaded to the GDR state.

> The GDR pays tribute to the theologian and revolutionary Thomas Müntzer as the exponent of those traditions of the early bourgeois revolution which stressed the struggle of the oppressed masses for a better life in social equality and security. With the renewal of the socialist society these traditions are being jointly continued by the working classes, the class of cooperative farmers, by all working sections of the population in our republic, by their parties and mass organizations.
> — (Cited in RWK: p. 58).

Rhetorical tropes in the mural capture the irony of Müntzer's duality as the religious commander of class struggle. Thus below the Tower of Babyl he is seen talking to the crowd. Is he spreading The Word? Is he spreading revolution?

Fig. 21 Detail / Müntzer at the Tower of Babyl
- Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany

The analysis of historical materialism arising in the medieval society begun by Engels has here been conflated with an extended metaphor (myth) intended to make sense of East German nationhood by naturalizing the historical value of Communism in the East German state. As Roland Barthes correctly observes myth serves the ideological function of naturalization; it gives the complexity of human acts the simplicity of essences and it does away with dialectics (Barthes, 1973). But rather than helping to make sense of the experience as a matter of self evidence, the formulation of the ideological code became increasingly ambivalent and contradictory. This became more apparent as the regime progressed. Walinski-Kiehl points out for example that the specific analysis of the 1950s, which focused on Müntzer and the peasants' struggle as precursors of the new socialist state were unproblematic and probably gained wide acceptance. In particular, school texts such as the 1959 history book aimed at the sixth grade, helped to disseminate these myths widely and stressed the significance of Müntzer, together with the Peasant War. Luther was portrayed in this educative literature mainly in negative terms (RWK: p. 61). He describes later developments from the late 1960s onwards, when Müntzer began to be upstaged by Luther, who was increasingly incorporated into the GDR's progressive tradition. Many rank-and-file party members were sceptical about Luther's sudden political canonization and were reluctant to involve themselves in the 1983 Luther Year celebrations. Then in 1989, East German citizens were presented with an inconsistent portrayal of Müntzer. On the one hand, some historical studies were drawing more attention to his theology rather than to his radical political programme, and the conclusions in these works differed little from those put forward by Western scholars. On the other hand, Müntzer was still presented in the *Theses* as the people's champion, revolutionary warrior and spiritual forefather of the German socialist state. The incompatibility between the two views of Müntzer helped to undermine, rather than naturalize the Reformation as evidence of an historical narrative concluding with the formation of the East German state.

This ambivalence is compounded by the domain of the panorama. A significant feature of architecture is to mark out separate domains, whereby settings exert a coercive force on the meanings that can be produced or received within them. The Panorama setting is quite clearly a classified domain where its specific meaning of revolutionary collective identity can be expected to prevail. But domains also produce sites of conflict whereby one group is excluded from the other. This clearly emerges in particular reactions to the Panorama. Walinski-Kiehl suggests that unsurprisingly, the enormous cylinder-shaped museum building was soon derided and was nicknamed the 'elephant toilet' by cynical visitors. Many GDR citizens seem to have resented the cost of erecting such an immense structure that had little meaning for them, and that appeared merely to display the grandiose illusions of an aloof, remote ruling élite.

Disillusionment with the Panorama Museum was succinctly expressed in a letter written by a worker from Görlitz in typical anti-language to the Minister of Culture, Hans-Joachim Hoffmann:

> I am only a simple worker, but one perhaps who has eyes to see and ears to hear. And a gob to says what it thinks . . . We are supposed to be the greatest country and yet we have built this crazy thing [the Panorama Museum] . . . We are a socialist country and don't need a pilgrim site like in Jerusalem. That is only for believers and they should only build it if they need it, but not with our money . . .
>
> — Cited in RWK: p. 59.

This worker, Walinski Kiehl suggests, cynically inverted the GDR's historical mythology and raised the awkward question of whether a religious kind of veneration was appropriate in a secular, atheist state. But of course the form of myth is not a symbol. The panorama and the mural have too much presence; it is an "indisputable sign" (in Barthes usage [1973]). At the same time this presence is put at a distance, it "becomes the accomplice of a concept" (ibid), which in this case is that of East German Nationalism. Its literal, factual sense makes this myth absent. What emerges thus from the words of the worker from Görlitz is the failure of the project to reflect on questions of class by representing the state through the prism of nationalism rather than class. It is precisely this political agenda that has failed the mural; a similar agenda of nationalism rather than class, I hope to show has underpinned many of the political wall paintings of Northern Ireland.

By way of contrast the representation of the Peasant War as the starting point of a proletarian-revolutionary tradition emerges in the modest Peasant War Museum located in the Kornmarkt church in the nearby Thuringian town of Mühlhausen described by Walinski-Kiehl (RWK: p. 60). Although this museum was partly reorganized in 1983 to take account of the Luther Celebration, and again in 1989 for the Müntzer Jubilee, the essential elements of the exhibition had remained intact since its opening in 1975. The museum presented the Peasant War in a very traditional manner: a series of relevant exhibits (primarily copies rather than originals) were mostly housed in glass cabinets that were placed close to the walls of the former church building's high interior. At the start of the exhibition the focus was, in conformity with Marxist orthodoxy, on the 'economic base' and the 'materialist' aspects of the late Middle Ages, e.g. new productive developments, agrarian feudal relations. It then moved on to a consideration of the Peasant War itself. Finally, Müntzer and the Peasant War tradition in twentieth-century socialist history were considered. Photographs were displayed of the German Communist Party's jubilee celebrations in 1925 commemorating the 400th anniversary of the struggle. The last display

focused on socialist transformations in agriculture, particularly the collectivization of land from 1945 onwards. Proud peasants were shown, industrious and content in their agricultural cooperatives. Needless to say, Mühlhausen's cooperative was named symbolically after Thomas Müntzer. For East German visitors to the museum the message was clear and unambiguous: the aspirations of Müntzer and his peasant army had found their realization in the GDR state. To drive the point home, a quotation from Müntzer, made in Mühlhausen on 9 May 1525, was inscribed high up on a wall facing the museum's entrance: 'Power shall be given to the common people' (*'Die Gewalt soll gegeben werden dem gemeinen Volk'*). A large picture painted in 1956 by W.O. Pitthan hung on the wall below the proto-socialist slogan, helping to reinforce it. This painting, produced in a Socialist realist style, depicted an intense-looking Müntzer haranguing a crowd of armed, militant peasants.

The Commission for the Production of the Mural entitled Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany.

The Terms of Reference

The project had its origins in the autumn of 1971 during the promotion of art in the name of 'Breadth and Diversity'. In anticipation of the 450th anniversary of the peasant uprisings, the East German Communist Party (SED) leaders in Halle in July 1972 decided to erect a memorial on the Schlachtberg hill at Frankenhausen, to be dedicated to "the German Peasant War and the revolutionary work of Thomas Müntzer" [5]. It was only much later in April 1975 that Cultural Minister Hoffmann offered the Leipzig painter Werner Tübke the commission to execute the painting. The period between these years witnessed disagreement regarding the commission's terms of reference. The first explanatory model defined three successive sections of a general revolutionary cycle reaching back in the first cycle to the impact of the Bohemian Hussites on Germany around 1476, secondly to the Reformation and the Peasant War as the climax of the early bourgeois revolution from the posting of Luther's thesis in Wittenberg (1517) to the defeat of the peasant uprisings in 1525/6, and thirdly a descending line of revolution ending with the demise of the Kingdom of the Anabaptists in Muenster in 1535. What was originally in mind was a panorama modelled after the Borodino Panorama Monument in Moscow, which features an extraordinary 115-meter long circular painting by the Russian artist Franz Roubaud, depicting a particularly dramatic

[5] Refer to the *Purloined Contract* On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the_contract.html retrieved 03/03/09.

and crucial moment in the battle fought between the massed French troops of Napoleon and the Russian soldiers under Field Marshal Kutuzov. Its painted style of figurative realism was particularly pleasing to the SED. A Party resolution from top SED leaders on 6 March 1974 declared that the panorama should portray "a historical moment in the confrontation of the people's army under the leadership of Müntzer against feudal military forces on 14-15 May 1525 in Frankenhausen". After the Leipzig Müntzer specialist Manfred Bensing put forward several ideas on how to present the subject, recommending, for example, that the moment of the battle itself not be depicted, rather the situation directly before the battle, or that the development of events in the Frankenhausen camp be presented in a chronicle, a debate erupted over possible variants of the concept.

In June 1974 the Leipzig art historian Ernst Ullman presented a thesis paper proposing a number of variants including a proposal for a panorama of the Frankenhausen battle of 15 May 1525, strictly oriented on the Moscow model (a variant the writer himself immediately called in question as inappropriate for the purpose of promoting a historical national consciousness). Although the Borodino model was tied to its earlier and broadly phrased resolution of 6th March 1974 that the Panorama should portray "a historical moment in the confrontation of the people's army under the leadership of Müntzer against feudal military forces on 14/15 May 1525 in Frankenhausen"[6], the Ministry of Culture rejected this Variant as it was felt impossible to realise historical dialecticism purely on the basis of a crushing defeat of peasant rebels. The addition of further proposals forthcoming from Ullman managed to expand the debate.[7] Hence later that year in July 1974 a proposal was put forward suggesting that the painting should embody the interpretation of the processes of revolutionary development through a sequence of scenes thematically and formally linking various revolts and revolutions from the 14th century through to the liberation of the German army from Fascism by the Russian army in 1945, and which would include the peasant uprising on the Schlachtberg hill on most of its surface. The whole debate reached an impasse while the museum building was rapidly undergoing construction. On 21 October 1974 and following debate that took the matter no further the Central Institute for History at the Academy of Sciences submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Culture. This proposal rejected in principle all previous suggestions and proposals. Instead it proposed that the Panorama should be a memorial to the German Peasant War.

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[6] On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the_contract.html retrieved 03/03/09.

[7] One other proposal was for a panorama with two scenes depicting the gathering of the peasants and Müntzer's last sermon and yet a third proposal was the abandonment of a self contained panorama altogether instead dividing the painting into eight sections separated by observer stands and expanding the theme to the entire social, economic, political and ideological issues of the early bourgeois revolution to every stage of the peasant rebellion movement against European feudalism.

> We recommend that the planned panorama be conceived as a memorial to the German Peasants' War and that —following Engels—the role of Thomas Müntzer in Thuringia and Saxony and the culmination of the Peasants' War in Thuringia should be highlighted. This could be achieved through a series of five to six scenes which illustrate the social causes of the early bourgeois revolution and the character of the social classes in conflict. The Reformation must also by all means be taken into consideration, in order to confirm the Marxist conception of the connection between the reformation and the Peasant's War. The focus should be concentrated on actual scenes from the Peasants war itself and on the role of Thomas Müntzer.

The statement furthermore recommended that the museum section of the memorial should emphasize the historical significance of the early bourgeois revolution. In April 1975, Cultural Minister Hoffmann personally decided to adopt this proposal, which subsequently formed the foundation for the project's final concept and aimed to expand the subject to the whole theme of early bourgeois revolution in Germany with specific focus on actual scenes from the Peasant war and the work of Müntzer.

The Scholarly Concept

At its first meeting on 28 April 1975, the central planning staff, newly appointed by the Cultural Minister, agreed that the aim of the project had shifted from the original suggestions centered around the Borodino model; rather the aim now was to create a monumental work of great generalizing nature in form and content as opposed to a naturalistic narrative and documentary illustration. The committee acknowledged that in principle, this agreement changed the character of the mural from that of the Party resolution of 6th March 1974 which foresaw the depiction of an historical moment only. At the same meeting the Leipzig historians Siegfried Hoyer and Manfred Bensing, upon the recommendation of the Academy of Sciences, were chosen to work out the binding scholarly concept, the painter Werner Tübke the artistic concept, and a member of the Ministry of Culture the museum concept. The definitive scholarly concept was officially approved early in 1976. Starting from the original political and ideological aims of the project, the purpose of the facility was outlined and formulated in general terms as an artistic attempt with the panorama painting to treat the Peasant War as an integral part of the early bourgeois revolution in Germany, "specifically focusing on the events in Thuringia under the leadership of Thomas Müntzer as well as in Frankenhausen", thus fulfilling the Politburo's desire for a panorama "dedicated to the heroic struggle of the peasant movement led by Thomas Müntzer . . . '(ibid). The deficiency of detail emerging from these paraphrased and generalized descriptions that resulted from the

disagreement as to the specific imagery that would best encapsulate the concept, did not however provide Tübke with a free hand; the committee overcame this possibility by drawing Tübke into the framework of the project's working group aimed at finalizing the scholarly, artistic and museum concepts. In this manner the committee circumvented the central authority's failure to agree on the required imagery by handing over the responsibility for doing so to Tübke, accepting at the same time his right to fulfill the commission in his own idiom.

The Artistic Concept

In April 1976 Tübke signed the contract for the creation of a 'monumental mural' for the 'Schlachtberg Panorama at Bad Frankenhausen'. He undertook to deliver an "artistic concept" and an "executable drawing" (a 1:10 version of the painting), for approval. After being released from his position as Rector of the Leipzig Academy for Book Design and Graphic Art in order to fulfill the commission, he started the first artistic groundwork in July 1976, which according to his work method, began with drawings, and in the same year, the prints and painting as well. This initial phase of exploring and familiarizing himself with the subject matter of the painting lasted up until the beginning of 1979 and resulted in a multitude of original paintings, which, together with his extensive forays into source studies, produced the necessary clarity for underlying questions of form. He produced 10 oil paintings, 5 watercolours, 142 drawings and 13 lithographs during the long phase of research and exploratory work after which he produced a 1:10 scale version of the work (i.e. 1.4 meters x 12.3meters), forming the visual component of the artistic concept. On 16 May 1979 he presented a written text of the artistic concept. The text made unambiguous reference to historical dialects, "the fullness of the process of change as well as their simultaneity" as follows:

> Unlike the hitherto well-known, conventional form of panorama paintings, in which only a decisive moment is taken from an historical event and documented in a temporal and spatial plane, the painting here will also indicate the complexity of the historical processes. The scenic development of the monumental painting, the symbols and allegories employed therein will document the dialectics of the historical process in the era of the early bourgeois revolution in a compositionally closed form. The logic of this concept precludes a chronological sequence. It will be necessary to discover or invent signs, allegories, and symbols near and amidst the concrete, factual plots in order to vividly recreate the event, wonderfully enriched with associations that reveal the complex intellectual course of events and the fullness of the processes of change as well as their simultaneity.

> The painting will not be subdivided into simulated frames; one scene will overlap into the other. Overall, it will be a painting of simultaneous images filled with extremely graphic events. Only an unconditional, figurative realism can accomplish this task. I intend to fill this panoramic scenery with a swarm of figures moving and acting in unison and in opposition. The surface of the painting will be completely covered, from top to bottom . . .
>
> — The artistic concept presented by Werner Tübke. [8]

Within a framework that he described as "the metaphorical interpretation of an entire epoch, the economic, intellectual, religious ideas of the period in general" (ibid) he went on to emphasize the importance of the Peasant Wars to the Reformation, the social and economic structures of that time, as well as issues in ecclesiastical history, Roman law, the significance of Müntzer, Luther and Phillip Melanchthon, Durer, Cranach and other artists of the middle ages, the links between the uprisings stretching from the Thurinigian region to Gaismair in Tirol, satanic cults and witchcraft, and much more.

The weight in this concept is on intellectual and academic associations. The mural's imagery is mostly structured on academic postulations of the iconoclasm evident in the imagery produced by 15th and 16th century artists such as Cranach, the Beham brothers, Pencz and Hieronymus Bosch. This code emerges in both the preparatory and final forms of the mural; hence the epoch is experienced in relation to a wide array of historical events and forces which results in a fractured and intertextual collage. This means that the iconography of the historical epoch is gained in a passive, contemplative condition. The iconophilic reinforcement of the dominant discourse that has absorbed the Reformation as its pivotal signifier can be explained precisely by the failed outcome of the battle. Importantly the values that the peasant battle on the *Schlachtberg* sought to replace with the new power of an egalitarian society, but which resulted in defeat and the subsequent torture and beheading of Müntzer, is a martyrdom that signaled the failure of the iconoclasm of that movement. Thus it is no surprise to find Thomas Müntzer who appears a number of times in the mural, shown in the battle scene with the flag of the Bundschuh movement [9] lowered, heroically resigned to defeat. And it is precisely this martyrization of the new (and hence its emergence) which the image of Müntzer and the defeated rebels depicts, in like manner with many religions that foster iconographic canons composed of images that depict an earlier martyrdom.

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[8] On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the_contract.html retrieved 03/03/09.

[9] The Bundschuh movement (1493-1517) was a loosely linked series of localized peasant rebellions in southwestern Germany.

Fig. 22 Detail / Thomas Müntzer
- Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany

Unlike the iconography of King Billy in the Northern Ireland context, which transformed the particular epochal event of the Battle of the Boyne of 1690 into the mythical entity of Unionism thereby bolting subsequent historical developments to a rigid narrative that leads directly from the battle to the political project of Unionism in the 20th century, the iconography of the Early Bourgeois mural embraces the entire epoch of the Reformation as evidence of the historical narrative—a visual iconic signifier through which the GDR was able to manifest its discourse of historical materialism. The mural is thus informative about the Reformation and not a performative engagement with it. This differs radically from grounding the narrative materially in history in the manner in which violence might do, for example as occurred in particular instances of the murals of Northern Ireland produced during the Troubles. Hence the mural's depictions of violence in which there is a noticeable absence in accounting for battle cruelty are indexical rather than somatic engagements with violence. The battle had in fact been a merciless slaughter of the

peasant rebels. When acts of torture are depicted they are intellectualized and shown in a totalizing mode of specific social relations. For example the mural shows the medieval 'breaking wheel' in use. When seen on its own it is a powerful connotative image. But it does not stand on its own. This can be explained by following the capture and beheading of Müntzer. Following the defeat of the rebels, Thomas Müntzer was captured imprisoned and tortured. Under torture he is said to have recanted and accepted the Roman Catholic mass prior to his beheading. His head and body were thereafter displayed in public. The violent treatment of Müntzer does not transfer to the mural. Rather a heroic dimension is ascribed to Müntzer; at the same time torture is depicted through generic example; that is to say it is a mere component of the mural's intertextual collage. An example is the image of torture on the breaking wheel.

Fig. 23. Detail / the 'breaking wheel'- *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany.*

Fig. 24 Detail / contextualization of the 'breaking wheel'- *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

The depiction of torture here stands comparison with the seven graphic depictions of state torture depicted in the commissioned murals of Raphael Carduro on the interior walls of the Mexico City Supreme Court building. One can decipher through their singularity so many other kinds of violence. At once part, cause, effect, example what is happening there translates to what takes place here, wherever one is. An extension of their significance arises in the dynamic semiotic exchange of meaning between the images and the court building, unlike the museum and Early Bourgeois mural which present as a single material signifier generating possible connotations. The graphic style shifts from an exaggerated perspective to small close-ups. Their proximity to the side of the stairwell invokes a combination of psychological responses. On one level they recognize David Siqueiros' insistence that murals move beyond a balanced interplay of autonomous panels to a spatial interaction with the movement of the spectator. He writes that one of the "powerful manifestations of life" is activated "in the volumes of man by his own movements, much as when one is walking everything stretches or shrinks with the rhythm of the walker's movement" (Siqueiros, 1975: p. 128). This physical interaction with the mural resonates with Roland Barthes' invitation to the viewer to grasp the text as a matrix of generic possibilities in the way that an essay is the moment in writing before meaning has set, before genre. However, on another, the effect of movement is countermanded by the mural's emphatic detail and absence of rhetorical form so that the roles of spectator and object are reversed and the observer becomes the object of scrutiny much in the way that Foucault theorizes the reverse effect of the panopticon.

The fragmentation, the collage of the Early Bourgeois mural foregrounds a filmic display. Gilles Deleuze has observed that film transforms its viewers into spiritual automata: "Film unfurls inside the viewers head in lieu of his own stream of consciousness" (Deleuze, 1989). On the one hand film is arguably a celebration of movement but on the other it is a state of physical and mental immobility. It is precisely the illusion of movement that drives the viewer into passivity. This is nowhere better formulated than in Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (Debord, 2009). For Debord the whole world is a movie theatre in which people are completely isolated from one another and from real life, condemned in consequence to a life of utter passivity. This condition, suggests Debord can be resolved not with increased velocity but with abolition of the illusion of movement. It is here that the Mexico City murals stand apart from the illusion of movement while garnering power from the spectator's movements. Unlike the Early Bourgeois mural, which through its circular and overlapping dimensions creates an illusion of movement, the Mexico City murals resonate in the contemporary mind in a series of static but spatial images that themselves stretch and shrink. The images acquire an extraordinary geometrical activity with the spectator's movements up and down the stairs and move the viewer to action rather than passivity.

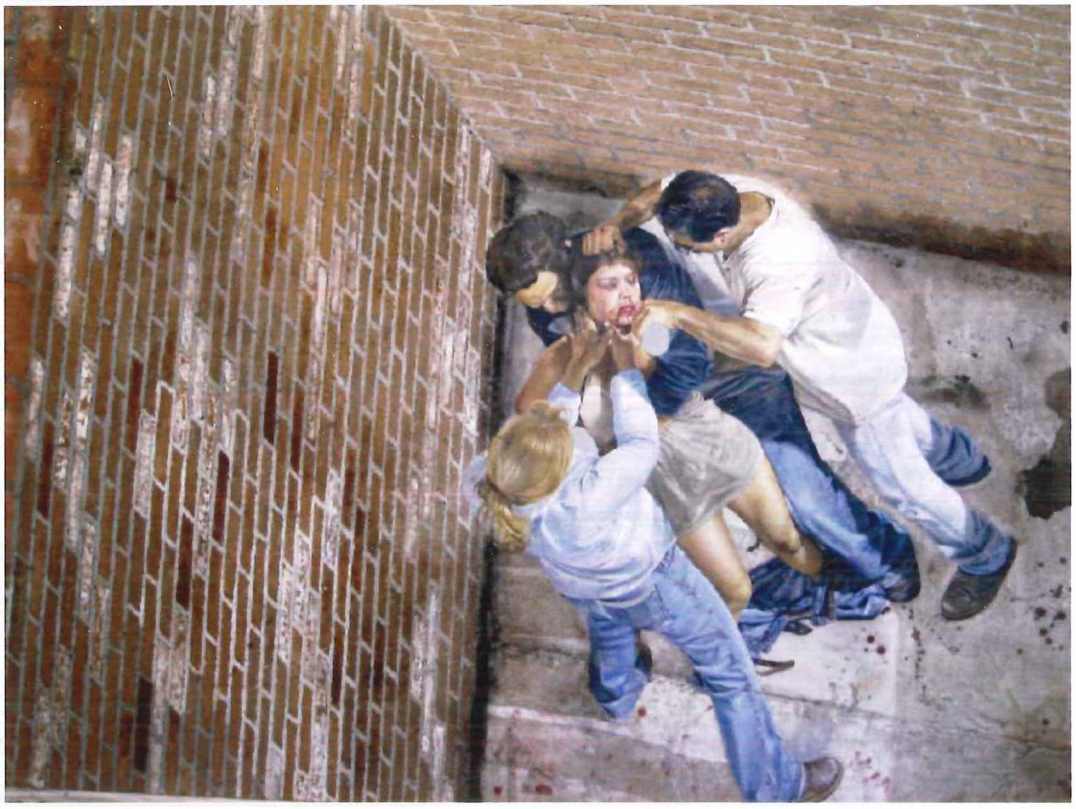

Fig. 25 Detail / 'Seven crimes' (1) – Supreme Court Mexico City - Raphael Carduro

Fig. 26 Detail / 'Seven Crimes' (2) – Supreme Court Mexico City - Raphael Carduro

Social Realism, Immersion and Representation, a Panorama

The Early Bourgeois mural is not Socialist Realist art in the strict sense, but it conforms to its notions in many respects. According to the official definition Socialist Realist artwork must be realistic in form and Socialist in content. This apparently simple formulation is highly enigmatic. How can a form, as such, be realistic? And what does Socialist content mean? In addressing these questions we may make use of Boris Groys' critique of the position of artistic heritage relative to revolutionary form, in which he shows that Soviet Socialist Realism was intended to be a rigorously defined artistic style; but not being comparable to another artistic style meant that its artistic specificity as well as its artistic value remained unclear. The main concern, he observes was that Soviet Socialist art should not look like the art of the capitalist west which was understood as a decadent formalist art, more particularly because it rejected the artistic values of the past. On the contrary the Soviets formulated a programme that appropriated the artistic heritage of all epochs. Kazimir Malevich articulated the voice of the avant-garde artists towards artistic heritage, when he argued that the new revolutionary times should be represented by new revolutionary forms. But this was rejected by critics who argued that the true revolution takes place not on the level of artistic forms but rather on the level of their social use. Thus being confiscated from the old ruling class, and put to the service of the new Socialist state, old artistic forms become intrinsically new because they are filled with a new content and used in a completely different context. Thus, Groys points out the introduction of Socialist realism initiated a struggle against formalism in art in the name of a return to classical models of art making – so that at the end of this process it became easily distinguishable from bourgeois Western art (Groys, 2008: p. 142).

In its various ways the iconography of the Early Bourgeois mural gives expression to these notions of art making. Its deployment of Reformation iconography and themes revives the forms of the classical period and puts them to use in a contemporary context. And it stands in sharp contrast to the contemporary formalism of the West. Furthermore its themes and facts provide a narrative that embraces historical development rather than fact as the whole truth. The mere depiction of facts, however, which was officially condemned as 'naturalism' in the Soviet Union should be distinguished from 'realism' which was taken to imply an ability to grasp the whole historical development, to recognize in the present world the signs of the dialectic of the emerging and developing future. The formulation of this propagandized art meant that the painting should be not only realistic but also encompass an image of the future world of the facts of Socialist life. This formula problemetizes the Early Bourgeois mural in that the mural centers on a struggle that leads to the rise of capitalism and thus precedes the proletarian recognition of the coming communist world. The return to the classical format is also misleading.

Socialist Realism coincided with the abolition of the free market. Whereas the market dominated, even defined, Western mass culture, Socialist Realism was noncommercial. Its aim was not to please the greater public but to educate and inspire the masses (that is to say realist in form and socialist in content). Groys suggests that Soviet culture under Stalin inherited the avant-garde belief that humanity could be changed and accordingly that it was a culture for masses that had yet to be created. This means that its primary interest was not the artwork but the viewer. The viewer, notes Groys was conceived as an integral part of a Socialist Realist work of art and at the same time as its final product. The strategy for visual art works was accordingly a kind of photographic quality which would make the image visually credible.

But, as already established official East Germany SED policy on questions of Reformation history was ambivalent and often contradictory. It is this ambivalent discursive formation that frames the Early Bourgeois mural. The immediacy and certainty of interpretation to be found in the displays and art work in the Mühlhausen Peasant War Museum, for example are absent from the complex panoramic painting. Tübke found difficulty incorporating an unobtrusive message into the mural. He wrote:

> At the beginning I stood before a sheer, insurmountable wall in regard to working out the historical processes, had to acquire far more than a good general knowledge of the subject matter; at first I read specialist literature incessantly. However, when it was time to start executing the project, several factors accommodated me: first, the historians from the History Department of Karl Marx University Professor Bensing, Professor Hoyer – greatly assisted me in methodology and setting emphases. In addition to reading, I started drawing right away, from the beginning, first carefully exploring the subject, then coherently expanding, and in this way I avoided a situation I fear: first, historical appropriation, then artistic production. When I look back on it, this work phase baffles me. It was, unlike my other historical artwork, never scholarly in the real sense, rather I dreamt my way through the texts, absorbed much only into my short-term memory, drew groups of figures, occasionally lost track of the goal, fragments later found their proper place. During this phase I feared, as the devil fears holy water, and rightfully so, any leap ahead to the compositional work. The task at hand was constant accumulation, nothing but accumulation, so that I could later dare to give birth spontaneously, once and for all, from my abundance without the need for later corrections."[1]

It is this ambivalent discursive formation that frames the Early Bourgeois mural. Firstly it affects its form. The recreation of each theme has been intellectually linked to reformation motifs. But one does not follow

[1] On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the_model_version.html retrieved 07/04/09.

the other. This means that the sequences are disjunctive; it is as though one is visiting a series of frames that flicker over the canvas powered by a malfunctioning film projector. It is precisely the motion of film that drives the viewer towards passivity (in Debord's usage, 2009). As Debord demonstrates it is not increased velocity that will bring about real social movement, but bringing motion to a standstill. It is this sense of movement that drives the Early Bourgeois audience into passive education.

Thus emerging in the mural out of the disjunctive thematic material that is stitched together by a single signifier, that is to say the Reformation is a fractal-like model in the sense that the imagery undergoes iteration that is self similar but is not regular. The idea of self-similarity combines with that of spreading out the countless metaphors and metonyms. This structural model is strengthened by the panorama's specificity which has been formulated in such a way as to transfer the visitor into a virtual world. A visitor enters the Panorama Museum into a large reception area. It has a service desk for the purchase of memorabilia, postcards, videos and foldouts of the entire mural. There is a counter where coats, cases and cameras are collected from visitors. There is a first class restaurant - Café P. which offers tour groups a wide range of food and beverages and can seat 87 guests (plus an outdoor terrace with 30 seats during the summer months). One then ascends a steep and long staircase to the first level located below the rotunda where a few contemporary paintings and other art works are displayed in conventional lighting. From this level one is transported from the life of everyday into the virtual world as one ascends the stairs to the darkened rotunda vault containing the mural where the spectator is surrounded by the bright space of images. The central platform has no lighting at all. All lighting is concentrated on the mural. Without the possibility of comparison with objects external to the painting, the spectators gaze is completely subsumed by it. The virtual content of the mural appears to the spectators, standing in the dark with the light reflected back off the canvas, to be itself the source of the ~~real~~ the virtual immersion in 1725 sq. meters of painting succeeds in occupying the spectator's gaze by its very luminosity.

In the first few minutes the illusion to my mind was so irresistible that the image space was experienced as the real presence of a second world. An earlier visitor explained his experience this way in the visitors' book:

> Entering the huge vault, one's eyes are drawn upward; then dizziness. One tries to orientate oneself; one hour can never be enough. It is a world which opens up there; human world in the first third of the 16th Century - Reality and symbol of the new superpower.

The assumption is thus of being caught up in the real, intended as a space of presence. But the illusionistic element is not to be confused with connotations of fakedness or deceptive appearances which the

spectator can embrace with abandon. In line with the political message, the documentary value and academic foundation of the mural lays claim to this 'second reality', which has been produced by endless labours of reconstruction. The idea of exercising control and judgement over art by applying a kind of fixed canon was a notion that Werner Tübke clearly embraced. On the basis of a style that was superficially realistic that functioned above all through a massive quantity of detail, the work is a chronicle, a record of events, an eye witness.

An intertext is necessary here. From the outset the project was planned to realize the mural of the Peasant War in the form of a panorama because of its popularity as a medium of images. The theme was not merely of local importance but addressed the nationalist and patriotic sentiments of the population, and consequently the whole endeavour bore great political significance. And clearly Werner Tübke was the ideal choice from the beginning. His artistic style, his reputation as a chronicler of class conflict and his standing in cultural politics made him the favoured candidate. [i] The Panorama demands special consideration for two reasons: first this illusion space represented the highest form of illusionism and suggestive power that used traditional methods of painting; it is also exemplary in that this effect was an intended one, a pre-calculated outcome of the application of technological, physiological and psychological knowledge. The deployment of the panorama for the propagandization of East German nationalism was thus an eminently suitable medium.

As an artistic form the panorama has its origins in the 18th century when on the 17th June, 1787, Robert Barker patented a process under the name of "*la nature à coup d'oeil*" (Nature at a glance). Using empirical methods, he developed a system of curves on a concave surface of a picture so that the landscape, when viewed from a central platform at a certain elevation, appeared to be true and undistorted and produced an unbroken horizon. By these means a panoramic view could be depicted on a completely circular canvas in correct perspective. The application of this invention became known a few years later under the neologism 'panorama'. The phenomenon has its foundations in a largely unrecognized history of immersive images, beginning in antiquity with image spaces of illusion, found mainly in private country villas such as the Villa dei Misteri in Pompeii, the Gothic fresco room, and the many examples of Renaissance illusion spaces for example the Sala Della Prospettive. Historically, the phenomenon of immersion has been used not only for private fantasies, but also as a public forum for religious or political spectacle such as the ceiling panoramas of the Baroque churches, the Theatrum Mundi and the Sacri Monti movement. Oliver Grau observes that in 1486, when the advancing Ottoman Empire was making pilgrimages to Palestine increasingly difficult, the ambitious project to replicate the Stations of the Cross on the Sacro Monte at Varallo was to formulate an immersive biblical Jerusalem (Grau, 1995). He suggests that the most famous virtual installation on the Sacro Monte, the Calvary, was created by

Gaudenzio Ferrari, who was much admired by his contemporaries and placed in the company of Raphael, Michelangelo and Leonardo. Ferrari's creations were made in the service of mimesis supported by techné. Some of his colourful, life-size, terra-cotta figures wore real clothes and wigs, and had glass eyes. At the core of his technique was the fusion of the three-dimensional foreground with the two-dimensional fresco-a sort of faux terrain that created the illusion of blending fresco and foreground. At night the chapels could be visited by torch-light, which heightened the impact of the illusion. On some days, pilgrims would arrive at the chapels in their thousands, and the monks leading them through the installations found it necessary continually to remind them that this was not the real Jerusalem. If the history of immersive media is partly obscure, in this case we have evidence of their highly suggestive power.

Grau writes of the Sacro Monte that it bears a marked similarity to Wagner's conception of the Gesamtkunstwerk, in which the observer came into direct contact with the image and was immersed into a situation, a presence that involved the observer physically and psychologically in distant events. Like the Sacri Monti the nineteenth century panorama was a mass-entertainment sensation. Representations of nature provided a visual totality that allowed journeys through time and space. The sublime aesthetic effect of the horizon lent the viewer hitherto unimagined powers of sight. But out of the suggestive strength of the medium grew a second aesthetic component, the pictorial strategy of Immersion. This formulation shifts the imagery from illusionary representation to immersive presence. This calculation influenced and formed the policy of suggestion of the Battle Panoramas, which came to account for a third of all Panoramas. After the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/71 the "dark side" of the panorama that is the battle Panorama saw its greatest popularity. From 1880 Germany became the international leader in presenting and producing panoramas. From the official state perspective of political propaganda no panorama had more energy lavished on it than the Battle of Sedan by Anton von Werner. Millions of visitors came to Berlin to see the zenith of illusive techniques, the Sedan Panorama of 1883 on more than 7000 square feet of canvas. When The Neue Preußische Zeitung reported the affect on a visitor to the Sedan Panorama as follows: "At first the visitor is frozen... then he's afraid of the horses and feels compelled to draw back . . . The air seems to be filled with swirled-up dust . . . Trumpets bray and drums thunder," it might just as well have been referring to immersive impact experienced on first confronting the Early Bourgeois Panorama.[2] The image was not experienced as a self-contained object; indeed it negated the idea of a closed work of art, appearing instead as reality - everything was image. The technique has been so effective that as recently as the 1980s, societies like North Korea, China or Iraq, have used the panorama as an instrument of nationalistic propaganda. For example besides the Borodino

[2] On line at http://www.unites.uqam.ca/AHWA/Meetings/2000.CIHA/Grau.html retrieved 15th June 2010.

panorama, The Battle of Stalingrad, 1962, USSR, The Battle of Al-Qadissiyah, 1968, Iraq, the Panorama of the Liberation of Plevin, 1977, Bulgaria, The Battle at Teschou, Pjongjang, (after 1987), North Korea, The Panorama of the Arab-Israeli War, Cairo, 1988, Egypt, The Battle at the Bridge of Lo Gou of July 1937, Peking 1988, China, are Panorama's deployed to propagandize military action with the intention of winning the observer of the work over to the political aims. These explorations into the virtual are technically not comparable with the illusions now possible with the aid of new techniques for generating, distributing and presenting images, by which the computer has transformed the image and now suggests that it is possible to 'enter' it, thus laying the foundation for virtual reality as a core medium of the emerging 'information society'. All the same, each epoch has made extraordinary efforts to produce maximum illusion with the technical means available and one of the most exceptional vehicles for painted illusionism is Robert Barker's patented panorama.

Barker's invention very quickly became a favourite medium for art education, political propaganda and most importantly, entertainment and this means that the notion of art as beauty was put aside in favour of art's use value. The step from using the panorama as an instrument of education to sharpening its mass appeal and suggestive power in the direction of mass propaganda is a short one. Military leaders in England and France were certainly aware of its possibilities; Barker wrote: "I was introduced ... to Lord Nelson, who took me by the hand, saying he was indebted to me for keeping up the fame of his victory in the battle of the Nile a year longer than it would otherwise have lasted in the public estimation" (cited in Grau, 1995: p. 65). The suggestive and emotional effect of immersion is the hallmark of the Panorama's aesthetics as a medium; it is characterized by diminishing critical distance to what is shown and increasing emotional involvement in what is happening. The aesthetic experience of immersion is thus seminal to the conception of the panorama. The panorama, much like the majority of virtual realities, almost wholly visually seals off the observer hermetically from external visual impressions, expands perspective of real space into illusion space, observes scale and colour correspondence and makes use of indirect light effects to make the image appear as the source of the real. The intention is to install an artificial world that renders the image space a totality or at least fills the observer's entire field of vision integrating the observer in a 360° space of immersion offering a completely alternative reality. The artificial world of the panorama is all together different from the non hermetic effects of illusionistic painting, such as *trompe l'oeil* where the medium is immediately recognizable, and from images and image spaces that are delineated by a frame that is apparent to the observer, such as with certain aspects of theatre and particularly television. In the delineated form, these image media stage symbolically the aspect of difference, and leave the observer outside. Thus Alexander von Humbold, the German naturalist and explorer observed that the new 360° image medium could

"almost substitute for travelling through different climes. The paintings on all sides evoke more than theatrical scenery is capable of, because the spectator, captivated and transfixed as in a magical circle and removed from distancing reality, believes himself to be really surrounded by foreign nature" (Humbold cited in Grau, 1995: p. 69).

Grau writes that like the majority of battle panoramas, The Battle of Sedan aimed to 'educate' through a powerful model – not of democratic thinking but of unquestioning obedience. In his study of the panorama, Stephan Oettermann treats the aesthetic experience of immersion only marginally and defines the panorama as "the pictorial expression, 'symbolic form' of a specifically modern, bourgeois understanding of nature and the world" (Oettermann cited in Grau, 1995: p. 110). Grau however makes the point that this is at best an incomplete characterization of the aesthetics and phenomenology of the panorama, of which the suggestive and emotional effect of immersion has always been the hallmark and argues that since the reappearance of these circular paintings in the 1980's in countries for example China, North Korea, Iraq and Egypt as a medium for glorifying military actions significant from the viewpoint of national policy and history, Oettermann's analysis is questionable.

To equate a symbolic form of the configuration of the medium panorama with a specific intellectual position is, in view of the differing forms of political systems that employed and still employ it, untenable; but this untenable position is precisely what occurs when the Early Bourgeois mural is articulated in the following terms:

> "The panorama is tied to the circular form. That gives it a context which informs the overall meaning . . . The context of original sin and divine justice is the beginning and end of human history according to the theological religious understanding of the 16th century . . . I think the work is timeless . . . In a nutshell one could say it shows the eternal recurrence of the same, the basic social problems remain the same, that is the basic message of the image displayed in a complete form, i.e. in a circle without beginning or end, so that history appears as a continuum, without linear higher development, which is in flagrant contradiction to the official history of the GDR" (Gerd Linde, Panorama director). [3]

Writing in the Getty Research Journal, No. 3 (2011), pp 99-116, Eckhart Gillen has recently extended this discourse by relating Tübke's portrayal of past events to " . . . the humanist theory of history as a cycle" (Gillen, p. 110). He links this argument to the circular form of the panorama. He describes the effect of the panorama on the visitor as follows: "The spectators inside the rotunda of the Panorama museum sense that there is no escape from this world without beginning and end" (Gillen, p. 111). He links the threads

[3] On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the_contract.html retrieved 04/02/09.

by suggesting that the battle ". . . supposedly to liberate the peasants from the shackles of feudalism, had its roots in humanist thinking, which is personified in the circle of humanists around the fountain . . . "(p. 106).[4] According to this evaluation the mural is coded with a specific intellectual position that is wholly dependent upon its circular design. This severs the mural from its fundamental facts: the painting is no longer concerned with the failure of the peasant uprisings, but rather is concerned with depicting the circularity of all social processes; hence the mural according to this reductive argument reflects the failure of the eschatological concept.

The question arises whether the horizontal views and awe inspiring landscapes that are common to most panoramas, regardless of subject—townscapes, landscapes, battles—originate from a 'bourgeois view' or whether the configuration of the panorama image machinery itself invokes such motifs, that is whether they inhere in the medium. The panorama undoubtedly is suited to bright imagery. Dark, confined spaces as often encountered in the diorama would be unconvincing as an illusion if they were depicted on a convex canvas in place of the concave canvas. Rather the medium has the power to endow the imagery with an enduring effect, irrespective of the social system of the society that exhibits it. The attribute of a specific intellectual position with reference to the panorama dissolves away when Michael Foucault's analysis of the Panoptican is considered. The design of Jeremy Bentham's model prison – Foucault called it "powers laboratory" – arranges the cells in a panoramic circle around a central observation tower. Behind bars, the prisoners are subject to total observation by the prison guards, and this total control, according to the theory, would be the means of their reformation. In the Bad Frankenhausen panorama, the prisoners are replaced by the figurative representations but this offers nothing more to the observer who is hermetically sealed off from everything extraneous to the picture, than an illusionary total view: were it not hermetic there would be no feeling of presence or virtuality. Boundaries between picture and observer are blurred within a controlled and structured situation in order that the image will form an indelible impression. The situation of Bentham's Panopticon is reversed in the panorama, a symmetrical panopticism occurs and the observer becomes the object of political control.

Although the Early Bourgeois panorama is not a panorama in the strict sense of an illusionistic, temporally and spatially homogenous picture, nevertheless its similarities with the process of immersion mean that it's panoramic dimension problemetizes its analysis. Setting it apart from the absolute transformation from illusion to immersion is primarily its theatric quality. It is not a panorama in the strict sense of temporality – that is it is not confined to a single event such as a battle or landscape, but to a

[4] It should be noted that in fact the figures are grouped in a haphazard and more linear format in front of the fountain. The characterization of all the figures as "humanists" is not credible.

historical process; it is not entirely spatial in that all possibility of distraction is not hermetically sealed off (the entrance is visible, the ceiling does not form part of the mural); it is thus not entirely illusionistic. Its primary quality is its figurative realism and not its technological illusion; it is thus not entirely illusionistic. A look at the contrast between the Sacro Monte and the Bourgeois mural serves to illustrate this point:

Fig. 27 Detail - the Sacro Monte

Fig. 28 Detail - the *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

But it installs the suggestive strength of the horizontal view— through strategies that expand perspectives of real space into illusion space, observes scale and colour correspondence and makes use of indirect light

effects to make the image appear as the source of the real; that is to say that it follows the Panora hallmark of a diminishing critical distance to what is shown and increasing emotional involvement what is happening. Thus the role of selective, focused perception in qualitative reflection is problemeti with the observer's absorption into the omnipresent image. Active selection of any art object, whicl otherwise essential for observation, is made impossible in the total image, for everything is ima Immediacy therefore is seminal to the powerful model rather than reductive methodologies t downgrade its totality to a series of metaphors and metonyms.

Fig 29 Interior view (1) Bad Frankenhausen museum and Early Bourgeois mural

Fig. 30 Interior view (2) Bad Frankenhausen museum and Early Bourgeois mural

An intertext here is important. Within this script there is no room for the clear and uncomplicated depiction of class struggle that the Early Bourgeois mural was intended to acknowledge. Rather the Reformation is documented by narrative, and thus is not shown. But it does incorporate Reformation history as the prime signifier of East German nationhood merely from the topology of its aura. That this is possible can be understood in terms of Benjamin's concept of the aura, especially in the notion of the loss of aura which characterizes the fate of the unique, authentic work of art in the modern age of technological reproducibility. Postulating a perfect reproduction in which it would be impossible to distinguish between an original and a copy, he raises the question whether the extinction of the material distinction between original and copy means the extinction of the distinction itself and argues that the disappearance of any material distinction does not eliminate another invisible but no less real distinction between them – the original has an aura that the copy does not. The aura thus assumes a new importance by virtue of the modern technology of reproduction and becomes necessary as a criterion for distinguishing between original and copy because the technology of reproduction has rendered all material criteria useless. Benjamin's studies *On the Concepts of History* (Benjamin, 2003) identify the link between historical change and transformation which are always viewed from the perspective of a particular present instant and interest. This is more than a retrospective historical enquiry and the role of hindsight. Rather as Graeme Gilloch argues Benjamin's famous study *The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility* articulates the current condition of the aesthetic object and domain against which "the fate of art in the nineteenth century can be measured"(Gilloch, 2002: 181). And the history

that unfolds is that of the demise of the unique, authentic work of art from the sphere of ritual and tradition to that of political practice. It is, as Gilloch notes, a history of the vanishing of aura which can only be told from the vanishing point itself, which is to say that the aura of the artwork is recognizable in a fleeting moment at the point of its extinction. This is not to be understood as a history of the life of the aura, but rather as a brief 'history' of its afterlife. An important realization is that for Benjamin, the distinction between original and copy is entirely independent of the material nature of the work. The original has a particular site and through this site it is inscribed into history as this unique object. The copy by contrast from its beginning appears as potential multiplicity. Benjamin's formulations are well known: " Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element — its here and now, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (Benjamin, 1992: p. 214). He continues: "These 'here' and 'now' of the original constitute the concept of its authenticity, and lay basis for the notion of a tradition that has up to the present day passed this object along as something having a self and an identity" (cited in Groys, 2008: p. 62). It is arguable therefore that the copy lacks authenticity not because it differs from the original but because it has no location and consequently is not inscribed in history.

The Balance of Power/Art as Propaganda

The Early Bourgeois mural assumed a specific interpretive community; a Marxist audience with sufficient self assurance of its socialist identity to observe in the mural the fundamental facts in Engels' usage that govern German history, "the grouping of the people according to kindred and common property in the soil" (Engels, 1969: p. 136). However, the deterritorialization of the mural—its removal from its inscription in East German history and its assimilation into the multiplicity of diversity and difference in the Federal Republic marks the transition of the mural from political propaganda to art identified with the art market. It is precisely the mindset for the aesthetic taste that prefers the multiplicity of consumerism, the consumable and disposable object to the object inscribed in history that gives political credibility to the transcontextualization of the mural.

Being one sided and aggressive is at least as modern as being pluralistic and seeking to maintain the balance of power. Modern revolutionaries and movements are also aiming at the balance of power but these movements are based on the notion of permanent struggle. Art put to the service of dynamic revolutionary balances of power necessarily take the form of political propaganda. This art is not a representation of power but it participates in the struggle as a mode of revealing the true balance of power. And art functioning as political propaganda itself is locked in a battle for space in the art world.

But of course following Walter Benjamin's concept of the 'aura', which is connected to the non-reproducible authenticity of a unique original, the specific effect of a work may be subject to strong fluctuations because of shifting socio-political coordinates in which case the effect of art in the form of political propaganda may transform from participation in the struggle to that of a mediated political commodity. This contention is nowhere better illustrated than in the radical transformation of the mural following the reunification of Germany. Its principal specificity of class conflict in the service of East German nationhood has here been replaced by coordinates stripping it of its historico-political particularity and replacing it with individualism and generalization, from its particularity into a representation, powered by pluralism, of universal themes such as Human nature or the Futility of Idealism. That is to say that the mural has been stripped of its own autonomy as political propaganda located on the axis of contestation with the West.

The Federal German Republic has reorganized the early Bourgeois image production, strategizing its notion of *Wende* (Turning) conceptualized as peaceful revolution (a tidier option than violence) in history books and school curricula to describe the transition to democratic capitalism within the former territories (*Länder*) of the GDR. The previous criterion under which the mural was produced has become irrelevant so that the work initially created outside of and even directed against the modern Western art institution has been stripped of class struggle and invested with the myth of capitalist humanism. Guy Debord writing *A User's Guide to Détournement* might have been writing precisely of this when he observed that "Any elements, no matter where they are taken from, can be used to make new combinations." [5] He was of course explaining how the creation of a spectacular illusionary universe of meaning, at once integrated and diffuse, was at the very heart of contemporary capitalism. And as an extension of this notion that the reuse of pre-existing artistic elements in a new ensemble serves the purpose of subverting the authority of the sign and converges in a general movement of propaganda. But whereas for Debord, *Detournement* is a tactic of disruption and activism, "... a powerful cultural weapon in the service of a real class struggle . . . It is a real means of proletarian, artistic education, the first step toward a literary communism," (ibid) the propagandized redeployment of the mural's imagery that *Wende* engages becomes a tactic of normality and subjugation. But what to do with the artist – Werner Tübke in the age of individualism where as Debord observes: "Since the negation of the bourgeois conception of art and artistic genius has become pretty much old hat, [Duchamp's] drawing of a moustache on the Mona Lisa is no more interesting than the original version of that painting" (ibid) — an age where coded ideologies multiply authorship? The answer found on the German info website reads as follows:

[5] "Mode d'emploi du détournement" originally appeared in the Belgian surrealist journal *Les Lèvres Nues* #8 (May 1956). This translation by Ken Knabb is from the Situationist International Anthology (Revised and Expanded Edition, 2006). On line at http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/detourn.htm retrieved 10/10/2009.

> He never considered himself a modern artist, but rather executed his ideas according to his own artistic conceptions, even if the work was commissioned by the ruling Socialist Unity Party of East Germany. Because he was also willing to accept such commissions, some accused him of being a state artist. Others, however, praised him as a critic of the system for his non-conformist stance. He himself refused to be pigeonholed in either category, for his artistic self-conception fit neither of these extremes.[6]

This apparently conciliatory explanation disguises the cultural code that categorizes the artist as 'apolitical' and perpetuates a specific orientation and ideology (hence stripping its historical ties to East Germany) by creating a privileged authorial purpose. This means that the political propaganda that is the origin of the mural has been replaced with an apolitical art work in the existing art institution and system of the contemporary West. This system functions on value judgements and conventions. Accordingly the metaphors and metonyms, symbols and signs spread across the canvas have been invested with new meanings and power.

The characterization of the artist Werner Tübke as apolitical is not convincing. If one accepts the hypothesis that the artist acted apolitically, purely as 'l'art pour l'art' then the content of the mural, which embraces the Reformation, is opened up to as many interpretations as there are perspectives of German Reformation historiography. It becomes 'anybody's guess' so to speak. But with the disappearance of the 'grand narratives', an art work can no longer be described as *opus perfectum et absolutum* which carried credibility before the contemporary period. Derrida remains the thinker most sensitive to the paradox of meaning (the denial of essence relies on its presence) by announcing the impossibility of all possible conditions. Through the insistence that 'the signified always already functions as a signifier' – forever preventing and unsettling the moment of closure which never quite arrives through the structural play of difference, deconstruction may be described as the mobile but disruptive and contingent moment of every structure of meaning, and of every concept. Yet, while it would be wrong to suggest that the endless blurring of the distinction between signifier and signified (supplementarity) invokes an infinite number of meanings (rather than an indeterminate number, which in itself is determinate, there is not just one), it is all the same through Derrida's play of signification that enquiry is opened to the type of meaning capable of manifesting in contexts that are contingent upon social and political factors, drawing attention to these

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[6] On line at:
http://www.germany.info/Vertretung/usa/en/__pr/GIC/FWW__News/28__Werner__Tuebke__PM,archiveCtx=2154200.html retrieved 10/10/2009

same constraints that then may impose closure through oppressive, disciplinary forces impacting on meaning that serve to curtail and reduce signification. And this means that it is not its content but the mural signifier that signals the struggle against the power of the image. The mural is invested with a new ideology; no longer a participant in the struggle revealing the true mode of power, the image now projected is not that of the mural itself but rather an image of the ideology – the prestigious mural as the image of the perfect balance of power between art and politics in the age of pluralism and diversity.

In 2001 the Federal Government revised its Blue Book, to include a list of 'nationally significant cultural institutions in the new Länder' (former East German territories of Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony, Saxon-Anhalt and Thuringia). The Blue Book is published as a 'cultural identifier' of Germany, its 2001 update stressing the importance of the 'East German cultural landscape' for the pan-German and European cultural heritage. It includes a number of museums, the so-called "Lighthouses" as well as important German personalities. The Frankenhausen Panorama has been included as one of twenty Cultural Memory Locations in the new Länder. It is perhaps ironical therefore, that the Frankenhausen Panorama in its totality (including Tübke's mural), whose dominant ideological construction was an iconic representation of German proletarian revolution should become the site inspiring cultural identification with the transition from communism to democratic capitalism through 'revolution'. Quite clearly the editing of revolution out of the Reformation (and hence out of the mural) and its re-contextualization has neutralized its previous authority and pasted in a different cultural and ideological hegemonic fabric,

With its historicity deleted, the mural has been catapulted into a new orbit. It is therefore not surprising to find the mural absorbed into the main stream of German (west) highbrow culture, such as when the ARTS.21 team of the Deutsche Welle Culture Magazine, lists a retrospective of Tübke's work second among its top three 'cultural picks of the most exciting offerings in the fields of art, music, film, literature, stage, design and architecture' (July 2009). Coming in second behind the German premiere of Quentin Tarantino's new World War Two movie, "Inglorious Basterds" and ahead of "Backstage in Bayreuth", (a new book by Katharina Wagner with photos by Enrico Nawrath which reveals what happens backstage at Bayreuth together with a re-launched festival website offering new podcasts every day – 'the latest one is about cleaning the theatre and making the costumes... rather profane views of Wagner's magical mythical realm'), the project of investing a revolutionary cultural heritage in the GDR has now simply disappeared under Tübke's mantle:

> A major retrospective of the artist Werner Tübke is on in Leipzig. Tübke was born in 1929 and died in 2004. He lived in Communist East Germany and was an important figure in the Leipzig

> School of representational art. But he also had a strong sense of self irony – painting himself as king, for example. Another exhibition marking his eightieth birthday can be seen in Bad Frankenhausen, at the museum housing his monumental oil painting "Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany" from the 1980s. It took him and a large team of assistants eleven years to complete.[7]

Early in 2008 the museum was privatized by an Association including the Land of Thuringia, the Kyffhäuserkreis and the cities of Bath, Frankenhausen and Sondershausen and the *Panorama Museum e. V.* incorporated. The museum has been promised a provisional sum of 1.3 million Euros federal state assistance until 2012 thereafter is expected to be self sustaining. It attracts about 120,000 visitors annually and aside from a collection of Tübke's works now holds an extensive collection of pictorial and graphic art works from other artists including Albert Leo and Fabius Gugel.

The possibility of a clear unobstructed interpretation of the peasant uprising through iconography of the mural, has been absorbed into a post modern heterogeneity of texts such that the image is not necessarily privileged, unique, symbolic, visionary, but rather is a text that is already written, allegorical, contingent, and open to synthetic contradictions, and in keeping with the market economy, it is commodified. This clearly emerges from developments surrounding the Mühlhäuser Museum. In 1995, following public debate and discussion, the decision was taken in Mühlhausen to dismantle the GDR display after 2000 and create an entirely new Peasant War exhibition as part of Germany's urban renewal programme. The exhibition remained a GDR "time capsule" until 2002. However, by the summer of 2004, the commemoration had transformed into street theatre when each year in May Mühlhausen is home to the "Müntzer Games", which in official festival literature are described as conceptually and performatively completely different to the usual medieval festivals in the region. These sorts of medieval enactments are popular in Germany. There is a medieval walled city called Zons not too far from Cologne; they have a medieval market every year. In one re-enactment two fat priests go round selling Indulgences and hassling young unmarried couples for their immorality. But the Müntzer Games are not entirely slapstick. The festival is a professionally organized event and tourist attraction, its main sponsor being the VR-Bank West Thuringia. A theatre director choreographs the programme which stages theatre settings of mercenaries and knights camps, farmer's encampments, historical markets, medieval knights in armour, farmers in costumes, Mühlhäuser camp wagons, knights in battle, medieval music, stage games and jesters, a theatre workshop, a game action with small theatrical performances, farm stock, taverns, bars and food in a carnival atmosphere, where the visitor is offered two turbulent days of medieval fun, games and education. Examples from the 2009 programme include music with the

[7] On line at http://www.dw-world.de/dw/.html retrieved 05/07/2009.

'charlatan', the presentation of trades at the market, history games described as 'The amorous adventures of a priest, a fragile preacher and a rebel in the City' and 'From a dream of mice, a rainbow and a departure for the war' and similar festive events. There is a Farewell Concert and the visitor is offered a memento of the war engraved on their very own replica penny thanks to the "bank employees of the festival's main sponsor the VR-Bank West Thuringia".

Professional actors play the roles of Thomas Müntzer, Heinrich Pfeiffer, Captain Eberhard von Bodungen and others, and give "life like shape" to the events and the characters portrayed. Thomas Müntzer is described in festival documents as the prominent reformer who stood up for the plight of the "common man", the spiritual leader of the radical wing of the Reformation German Peasants' War. In these documents, Heinrich Pfeiffer is described as a Cistercian monk who like Müntzer vigorously preached against the ruling orders, and who joined with Müntzer in Mühlhausen to lead the peasants at Frankenhausen. Their sermons and their capture and execution are re-enacted by the role players. Also provided is fun for the children and re-enactments of fairy tales such as the three little pigs. Since 2008, the festival has been renamed "The Peasant War Spectacle". For Silke Hüge, a Mühlhausen municipal employee, the whole spectacle is 'simply brilliant. It is as if you open a door, enter and it closes behind you'. For this municipal employee the spectacle is a total immersion in the medieval age. For Angelika Bergmann, festival director it is important that the games should refer to the town's history through theatrical representation telling of the life and work of Müntzer and Pfeiffer, two men who supported the peasants and for which they paid with their lives, in an entertaining manner. The festival thus is marked by slapstick, entertainment and education through informative theatrical performance. [8] The mingling of high culture with the profane in these festivals occurs in the manner understood by Bakhtin. Bakhtin described the carnival as an iconoclastic celebration that exuded an aura of joy rather than serious, emotional or revolutionary sentiment; instead of causing the violated icons of the older order to be supplanted by the icons of some new order, the carnival invited the participants to revel in the downfall of the status quo (Bakhtin, 1968). At the same time, Bakhtin's carnival theory also emphasizes just how inherently contradictory iconoclastic carnivalism is when used strategically as an artistic device, such as in film or in certain forms of didactic theatre. Bakhtin might well have been referring to the Müntzer Games for in these forms of carnival the community is automatically excluded from the participation in the carnival and becomes the audience. And audience passivity is a grand parody of the very *vita contemplativa* that carnival denounces.

[8] A full review of the festival over the years is available On line at *www.*bauernkriegsspektakel.*de/*willkommen/index.php retrieved 05/06/2009.

"The most elemental process of modern times is the conquest of the worlds as images". Martin Heidegger's concern with the superficiality of modern life and the forcefulness of imagery is echoed in the writings of Guy Debord who argues that the spectacle is not as one might think a collection of images; rather it is a social relationship that is mediated by images which have supplanted genuine human interaction. Never before has the world of images around us changed as fast as over recent years, never before have we been exposed to so many different image worlds. The workings of this contention can be seen in developments following the reunification of Germany. Prior to reunification of course the initial idea for the mural's imagery was a depiction of a battle scene modelled on the *Borodino* panorama; this idea ultimately manifested in Tübke's painting and a few postage stamps depicting images from the mural. Since then the mural has transformed from its fixed position in the panorama into a profusion of imagery that is found for example at The Peasant War Spectacle, on the internet You Tube with presentations of the mural supported by the sound track of Carl Orff's Carmina Burana, Thomas Müntzer video games, the top three picks of DWTV's cultural pick, the fragmentation of images found in postcards, brochures, fold outs, Google images, slides, and selected images chosen by critics and commentators. This multiplication of signifiers, is a convenient strategy for mediating social relationships in the new Germany whereby the mural is wrenched from its political project and recontextualized for use in the art market, that is to say that its production (the mural has become a sort of ready-made provided with a new text), evaluation and distribution follows the logic of the market. By contrast with its ideological production under the GDR, which was driven by the power of a vision, its images in the modern world are merely circulated and are thereby neutralized of their critical and affirmative potential.

Notes

[i] Werner Tübke painted in a figurative style strongly swayed by social analysis. His work covers a broad spectrum of interest from global social conflicts, workers movements, and neo-fascism, from historical and socio-political topics to religious motives, portraits and self-portraits. A brief list of the subject matter of his better known works are titled: Hiroshima; 1958/59, The Five Continents; 1960/61, On the History of the German Labour movement; 1961/64, The soviet Union; 1965/67, Fascism (The memoirs of Dr. Schulze); 1967/68, Beaches; 1970/73, Working class and intelligentsia; 1971/75, Italy; 1974/76, Man-the measure of all things; 1976/87; among these major works are large-format multiple panels, such as the great social utopia in which all differences vanish; Working Class and Intellectuals 1970/73. By the middle of 1990, his work comprised approximately 5,500 drawings, 400 water colours, 300 paintings (oil, tempera and mixed method) and 200 prints (mostly lithographs, but also etchings and wood engravings. The human figure has dominated his art. He was born on the 30th July, 1929. In 1948/49 he studied at the Leipzig School of Design and Book Production (HGBL). From 1950 to 1952 he studied art and psychology at the Ernst Moritz Arndt University, taking his state examination in art. 1952 to 1954 he was assistant lecturer at the centre for Amateur art, Leipzig. Subsequently he became a member of the GDR Association of Artists (VBK-DDR). During the years 1955-57, he was a junior lecturer for foundation year students at the HGBL, during 1962/63 Chairman of the GDR Artists Association (Leipzig) and from 1962 to 1973 first as lecturer, then from 1964 as senior lecturer and finally from 1972 as Professor at the HGBL. From 1973 to 1976 he was the Rector of the HGBL and in 1974 was appointed director of a master class for painting. From 1976 he began work on the Panorama painting while remaining on the staff of the HGBL (master class from 1986 onwards). In 1985 he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Leipzig. Along with Bernhard Heisig and Wolfgang Mattheuer, he was one of the founders and most important representatives of the Leipzig School, which had a significant influence on an entire generation of painters. Their realistic style of painting combined technical skill and a strong aesthetic sensibility with social analysis—the Leipzig School being the focus of German painting at the time. He died in Leipzig on the 27th May 2004.

CHAPTER TWO

The Theatrum Mundi

The Mural's Symbolism

The Mural – contextual origin

Allegory

— The defeat of the mystifications of symbolism and the possibility of restoring continuity to heterogeneous disconnected instants.

The Theatrum Mundi

Fig. 31 Detail / Theatrum mundi

- *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany.*

The mural's iconography has drawn comparisons with the Theatrum Mundi. For example the art theoretician Karl Max Kober writes:

> A theatrum mundi has been staged whose semantic content goes far beyond the material starting point. One reason for this can be seen in the interpretative wealth of the numerous details. Sometimes they are meant literally, at other times they take on a figurative meaning, and occasionally they can be subjected to individual reinterpretations – including puns and ironic leaps of thought. [26]

The Panorama director has a similar approach:

> For the sake of its atonement, the painter celebrates his world theatre in absurd rituals and strange, dreamlike, even trancelike, hallucinatory ceremonies, a mysterious, morbidly attractive alchemist play between existential states of mind, whose protagonists are mainly broken existences, problematic figures weighed with a heavy fate, costumed appearances, the homeless, beggars and others who have come too short in life, as well as harlequins, jugglers, commedia-dell'arte figures and fools. The artist himself even appears frequently in his work as a tightrope walker, juggler, and harlequin.[27]

The cavernous space of the illusionary panoramic vault holding the mural is conducive to commentary along these lines. Tübke himself spoke of the vocabulary of visual devices required for the painting of the mural on the circular canvas: "...triple parallel perspective, staggered and overlapping, with a descending central perspective in the upper third part of the canvas as well as a semantic perspective and a partially inverted colour perspective" (ibid). However, these compositional techniques are necessary adjuncts to the circular dimensions of the panorama; the upper and lower sections are coincidental perspectives whereas baroque depictions of upper and lower hierarchies contained in the theatrum mundi are determined by factors other than the technical demands of the canvas. The metaphor of theatrum mundi derives from classical sources such as Plato and Horace and from early Christian writers such as Saint Paul (Curtius, 138-44). Renaissance scholars had inherited a clear perception of a hierarchical universe from the middle Ages. According to this view, the world was a perfectly ordered structure, in which God reigns from heaven above, man exists on the earth below, and hell is an underworld lower still. The

[26] On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the_contract.html retrieved 24/05/09.
[27] On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the_artist.html retrieved 24/05/09.

hierarchical structures of earthly institutions--led by divinely ordained representatives in both the political and religious spheres--mirror this larger, eternal order (Denton). While not a new concept, it was frequently employed by baroque thinkers to express an ordered world and the forces that threatened it.

Baroque compositional techniques were frequently used to reinforce counter-Reformation precepts of the triumph of divine order and to this end were specifically employed to ensure that the spatial arrangement of stage or canvas could demonstrate a naturally ordered universe through the manipulation of vertical and horizontal positioning. These compositional arrangements used a vertical visual hierarchy that placed the heavens above and the underworld below. This is demonstrated for example in Pierre Daret de Cazeneuve's engraved title page (after a painting by Jacques Stella) for the *Conciliorum omnium generalium et provincialium, collectio regia*, a thirty-seven-volume work that describes the proceedings of various councils of the Church (both ecumenical and provincial) from 34 to 1623 CE and in the Francesco Fontebasso's painting *The Martyrdom of Saint Catherine.* A significant device of the baroque theatrum mundi was the creation of discovery spaces to accommodate a sophisticated narrative structure. For example the doorway in Laurent de La Hyre's *Panthea, Cyrus, and Araspus* functions as a discovery space, by opening up the back wall and revealing a large massed army whose fortunes will largely determine those of the figures shown in the foreground. Likewise on stage discovery spaces remind us that the baroque stage was open and expansive: dialogue was spoken from offstage, characters could enter or exit through trapdoors or from trapezes, and the discovery space added depth and dimension to the main stage area.[28]

The Early Bourgeois mural however is distanced from these notions of a theatrum mundi; it is enclosed in an illusionary vault in which there is no discovery space and its visual devices do not coincide with the traditional perceptions of an ordered world. But its theatrical dimension is irrepressible and resides in the spectacle. Indeed the imagery "leaps off the wall like a spectacle" as Artaud might have described it. On occasion Tübke saw a likeness between his act of painting and that of theatrical direction, describing himself as one who was "artistically directing from the wall with the aim of achieving the greatest possible magical effect on the viewer in the arena" (ibid). Assisted along the way with supports, such as clever lighting techniques, a theatric darkness within the panorama, and, on the canvas itself, colour contrasts of dark and white, stark red and grey and the vibrant movements of groups of figures all importantly portrayed in life-size proportion, the drama is played out in multifarious scenes, staggered and overlapping events simultaneously occurring on 'stages' constructed on different levels and at different angles, resulting often in vertical or diagonal visual axes. Variations of the principles of composition, such as alignment, dispersion, concentration, combine to create suspense which together

[28] On line at http://www.fathom.com/course/10701023/session3.html retrieved 15/04/09.

with the changes of light and colour gives rhythm to the clusters of human figures. The characters, events and historical quotations interweave through the diverse visual perspective. The figures are life-like; excursions into the fantastic through magic-like figures, demons and devils provide a subterraneous involvement.

But the analogy of a theatrum mundi is inappropriate from more than a structural point of view. Writing a eulogy upon Tübke's death, Christina Tilmann arts editor of the *Tagesspiegel* noted:

> Puppets, dolls, carnival figures: It is not for nothing that the painter (Tübke) so often included himself in his paintings as the figure of the Harlequin. It is the position of the outsider, the court jester, but the critical observer, that was Tübke's; his was not, as attempts have been made to brand him, the 'court painter' (in the light of a lucrative government contract awarded to a political artist).[29]

The question which arises from these observations is thus: what role does the painter Tübke play in the mural. This may be explored by looking at the medieval perception of a hierarchical universe according to which the world was a perfectly ordered structure, in which God reigns from heaven above, man exists on the earth below, and hell is an underworld lower still. The ancient sense of man as spectacle for the gods which arises as a consequence of predestination built into this hierarchy is preserved in the Shakespearean trope about the world being a stage, found in the famous monologue from *As You Like It,* spoken by the melancholy Jaques, comparing the world to a stage and life to a play, and catalogues the seven stages of a man's life, sometimes referred to as the seven ages of man: infant, schoolboy, lover, soldier, justice, pantaloon, and second childhood, "sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything", except the motif is pre-Shakespearean, inherited and transformed by him. It is an emblematic image that Shakespeare incorporates into his work only to hollow out and re-inflect. The medieval trope of the world as a stage involves the sense that we unavoidably play roles that we have not invented, and the sense of terrestrial unreality. It is inextricably bound up with a view of the world where supernatural agents determine human destiny, and where the secular is a place of illusion in contrast to a higher non-secular realm. The seven stages of man enacted on this stage are enacted in our spite, unconsciously.

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[29] On line at http://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/harlekins-heimkehr/519738.html retrieved 04/04/09. Tilmann writes: Marionette, puppen, karnevalsfiguren: nicht umsonst ist es die Figur des Halekins in der Maler sich selbst immer wiederin die werk integriert. Es ist die Position des Außenseiters, des Hofnarren, aber auch des kritischen Beobachters, auf der Tübke immer beharrt hat, auch gegenüber dem Versuch, ihn wegen lukrativer Staatsaufträge zum Staatskünstler, zum „Hofmaler" abzustempeln. My translation

The 'roles' implied in this metaphor are ones we suffer, not create, comprehend or own. All in all, the metaphor points to the limits of agency, the hubris and vanity of our projects: emptiness, illusion, powerlessness. Understandably, the uses of the metaphor were religious, homiletic. The affects corresponding to this metaphor are those of melancholy. But padlocked inside this metaphor, however, is a rather more subversive set of ideas and affects. If you take the metaphor rather literally in terms of the Shakespearean stage, what might it imply? The bare stage can *mean* anything, can represent any other space from a wood to a court, it can assume whatever meaning we impute to it through theatrical convention. The meaning of objects on that same stage is likewise not fixed – a block of wood is now Lear's throne, now a plinth for Hermione. The stage is defined by semiotic instability or easy reversibility. There is, moreover, an obvious split between actor and role. A commoner can play a king; a man can play a woman. Identities that had seemed pinned to particular categories of person turn out to be transferable or 'put on'; or, as Susan Sontag observes, "The theatrical is the domain of liberty, the place where identities are only roles and one can change roles" (Sontag, 1996: pp. 24-37).

In Shakespeare the stage is not simply given over to the 'liberty' of the theatrical. As so often in Shakespeare, the relics of the older world-view are still allowed a weak power. Macbeth's 'brief candle' speech, Jaques' conventional plaint from *As You Like It* both fall into this category. But such conventional expressions are now inside the theatrical frame rather than being the frame itself. In fact, everywhere in Shakespeare there are carriers of the old world view, those in thrall to superstition, religious piety, feudal hierarchy, chivalry. And there are those who, having cut loose from such ties, from the inherited roles which others venerate, are drawn to and made capable of self-invention. This self-invention can involve, simultaneously, the manipulation of those still bound by ancient bonds and pre-programmed roles. Iago and Edmund are close to the 'intriguer' mentioned by Walter Benjamin in his dissertation on the *Origin of German Tragic Drama* in which he analyses Reformation-era German politics and culture through the *Trauerspiel* genre (Benjamin, 1998). The intriguer is the choreographer of himself and others, whose manipulative practices are wholly without historical logic. The world presents itself as a scene and as a series of possible scenes, on which the other human beings are to serve as protagonists. For an Iago there is no inhuman presence watching or covertly guiding his actions. He is himself an inhuman presence, standing outside the roles and attitudes others suffer passively or readily internalise, changing and projecting roles and appearances as befits his design. He delights in his own stagecraft, or that a scenario has been well executed, that someone has played his assigned role well. The actual protagonists, meanwhile, are unaware of being instruments in this private theatre of cruelty. As well as a choreographer, the intriguer is a consummate actor: Iago plays 'honest Iago' and plays it well. His appearance is controlled and projected, not confiscated by a hidden God. And that projected appearance

fails to coincide with his essence. This definition of acting is what scandalised some Elizabethans about the profession – pretending to be something that you were not, forging a self (pun intended). But that something was capable of being forged cast doubts on whether it was so authentic anyhow. If a man could so easily play a woman, or a commoner so easily mime the gestures and authority of a king, is 'womanhood' or 'kingship' a property of women or kings? Is womanhood or kingship not simply rhetoric, gesture, habitus?

I tried to imagine the mural on the exterior wall rather than the interior. The mural is far too intimate and confiding; its scenes and actions invite the sharing of confidences. This is quite different to the manipulative practices of the intriguer who seems to know no 'experience' beyond the extrinsic shuffling of fixed elements. However, nor does it invite 'distance' and 'disinterested' viewing. There is a sense of participation through immersion which dispels contemplation. The onlooker is absorbed in an experiental fashion. One must walk the circularity of the panorama, pause to absorb a scene, move on physically drawn into the incidents not merely as an eavesdropper but as a participant in searching out the implication of the events as though joined with the characters portrayed.

Werner Tübke has painted his image into the mural in dissimilar roles. For example in this image from the mural we see him represented as a painter in medieval dress; we also see him represented as the romantic 'wanderer' of Romanticism portrayed in the writing of authors such as Schiller; and we see his corpse and an unworldly and bizarre figure carrying away his soul.

Fig. 32 Detail / Tübke - *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

Tübke's stroll through the Reformation is nearly reminiscent of the *flâneur*. In his *Charles Baudelaire*, Walter Benjamin states: "Empathy is the nature of the intoxication to which the *flâneur* abandons himself in the crowd. He . . . enjoys the incomparable privilege of being himself and someone else as he sees fit. Like a roving soul in search of a body, he enters another person whenever he wishes" (Benjamin, 1983: p. 55). But of course, Benjamin is writing of the *flâneur* in the context of the commodity. There is little scholarship surrounding the subject of the *flâneur* that in some way does not refer to Benjamin's writings on Baudelaire or the Arcades Project. In his work on Benjamin's treatment of the subject Terry Eagleton refers to the *flâneur* "that drifting relic of a decaying petty bourgeoisie who . . . strolling self composedly through the city . . . displays in living motion something of the commodities self-contradictory form. The commodities existence as fragment (Benjamin speaks of the commodity as 'abandoned' in the crowd) and his meanderings are as magically free of physical traces as the commodity is absolved from the traces of its production" (Eagleton, 1981: p.25).

And it does less than justice to Tübke to dismiss him as a mere rhetorician, preoccupied with style and pictorial display, as reflected in the evaluations of many commentators. For instance for Tilmann Tübke's painting is pure art unaffected by social realities:

> An escape into the world of beauty. A defiant eye closed to social reality, an anachronistic attachment to the painting style of the good old days . . . The ironic reflection from a distance of centuries. That is Tübke's own.[30]

Or, as the Panorama director puts it:

> There is an element of harlequinism and self portraiture in the imagery – however the imagery read as a whole has not been sublimated into an autobiography. It is nothing other than a plea for the individuality and independence of the artist and the primacy of the imagination over all systems.[31]

For the mural is tied as much to its mode of production as to its result. The productive forces required to produce the mural were enormous. Tübke recognized this as becomes clear from a key quotation:

> Starting April 1982 fifteen professional artists, most of them graduates from the Leipzig Art Institute, begin their work in the large studio in Leipzig, one after another. Felix Heinrichs from

[30] On line at http://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/harlekins-heimkehr/519738.html retrieved 04/04/09. Eine flug in die Welt des Schönen. Ein trotziges Augenverschließen vor der gesellschaftlichen Realität, ein anachronistisches Festhalten am Malstil der guten alten . . . Die ironische Brechung aus der Distanz der Jahrhuderte:Auch das ist Tübke (My translation).
[31] Ibid.

> Berlin, the Leipzig student and *diploma* candidate Dietrich Wenzel, Eberhard Lenk and Volker Pohlenz are the first. Their specific task was to trace the contours of the 1:10 version (made of the preliminary drawing in coal and secondly, the monochrome prime coat in egg tempera which occupied a two and half year period for completion) onto a transparency which was subdivided into 900 squares with 136-mm sides. Black-and-white photos were then taken of the transparency. The necessary style adaptation was even more difficult, for the monumental painting was to look as if it had been painted by hand. They (the artists) selected pieces from the preliminary versions, later from the 1:10 version, and had to stretch them painstakingly, first by drawing, then by painting, up to a 2x2 metre format, then to 3x4 metres. This work in the training camp lasted over one year. We worked together constantly in the workshop. Then decisions had to be made, as humanly difficult as it sometimes was. Now there are five outstanding painters who nowadays for outsiders, and sometimes also for the initiated, paint exactly as I do.[32]

The physical traces of these forces of production place the mural squarely in the camp of social relations. And it is these forces of production that put Tübke's narcissism in doubt. Rather his painted self in the mural characterizes him as part of what he creates, of his identity which is thus assured.

[32] On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/transference.html retrieved 04/04/09.

The Mural's Symbolism

Fig. 33 Detail –

Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany

But his narcissism is also put at risk by structural disparities in the mural that undermine the persistence of the subject and points to common ownership as an essential component of the mural's episteme. The battle scene is the most obvious. Unlike the Borodino Panorama the portrayal of violence is confined to narrow limits. An orgy of blood and carnage centred on the slaughter of the peasants, in which a panoramic immersion would have trapped the audience, would be counterproductive and made no contribution to the strengthening of national pride. Rather somatic presence is conveyed by the absence of blood in a broader communal sense in the rainbow's spectrum spread over the battle. In addition the careful mise-en-scène of a superior German art form has been preserved, a sentiment which Tübke's rhetoric articulates: "I am familiar with the fine arts of the 15th and 16th centuries, which has always been an important inspiration for my work. Since the necessary compositional scheme was as I imagined it given from the outset, I only needed to paint as I usually do, as if it were the most natural thing in the world". In other words the mural embraces a universal and homogenous political project as a reservoir of collective experience. The sheer number of human figures, the magical fantasies, the themes all overlapping and integrating with one another signal and reinforce the utopian logic of inclusion. It was in this sense that the mural fulfilled the politics of inclusion and provided a substantial component in the formulation of East German national identity—it hailed its own artistic projects and affirmed its historiography.

But as we know the contemporary Western taste makes no sense of the homogenous and universal but appreciates diversity and difference, to be more interested where the subject is coming from than where the subject is going to. This means that to be universal is to aetheticize one's identity as it is without any attempt to change it – a kind of readymade in the universal context of diversity. It is also true that this interest in diversity and difference has certain moral and political considerations – the defence of so called underdeveloped cultures against their marginalization and suppression by the modern state in the name of progress. But in fact such diverse 'social realities' do not exist. The apparently fragmented cultural realities are in fact implicitly connected by the globalized market. There is not a choice between universality and diversity; rather there is a choice between two different types of intertwined universalities: between the universal validity of a certain political idea and the universal accessibility obtained through the contemporary market. While the political idea is openly manifested, the universality of the market is a hidden, non-explicit universality that is obscured by commodified diversity and difference having its origin in privatization. And it is the demise of the command economy of East Germany and its replacement with a privatized market economy that has transferred ownership of the Early Bourgeois mural. For just as the complete abolition of private ownership of the means of production

was seen by the theoreticians and practitioners of communism as the crucial prerequisite for building first a socialist and then a communist state, so the same state that had been nationalized is now, since its reunification with the Federal Republic of Germany, privatized in order to build up capitalism. In both cases property manifests itself as an artifact, as a product of state planning, in the case of the latter the same narrow elite of owners and managers who control the private economy and who control the state.

It therefore comes as no surprise that the reunified Federal German has appropriated the mural's enormous store of images, symbols and texts that since the abdication of East Germany no longer belong to anybody as its own state property and symbolic capital. The art of appropriation, as Boris Groys observes sees itself as art after the end of history one which is no longer about the individual production of the new but about the struggles of distribution, about property rights and about the opportunity to accumulate symbolic capital (Groys, 2008). He might have been writing of precisely the plethora of interpretations of the mural coded by a choice of the present over the future, of that which has already been overcome historically, reflected in numerous recent commentators such as the author and director of the Panorama Museum Gerd Linder who put it this way: " . . . this magnificent vision of the eternal recurrence of the same, " [33] and, for example, in the commentary of the art theorist Eduard Beaucamp who, relying upon the fact that the battle of Frankenhaüsen ended in defeat, writing in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung argues that Tübke painted an allegory of the failure of proletarian revolution, (by necessary implication the failure of the GDR). According to this reading just as Thomas Müntzer witnessed the failure of his vision for a better future for the peasant rural population so also the vision of the East German leadership was witness to a failing socialist state wrongly founded on the rhetoric that 'man is the measure of all things'. He argued further that the mural is not a major didactic illustration, but an historical parable of human errors and confusion, with relevance to social unrest, upheaval and religious strife in the modern world. All the images, he wrote "show deep disagreement with the ideological programme of the GDR … Tübke's historical imagery does not unfold progressively in the GDR's image, but skeptically views history as a recurrence of the same, but never the same."[34] This circular argument takes both the factual and all arguments that refer to the factual to be merely the eternal recurrence of the same. There is nothing easier than to say that the struggle goes on, since this is assumed to be the truth of reason; it is more difficult to recognize that those involved in the struggle are in fact not struggling at all but, as Groys puts it "have simply ossified in battle position"(Groys, 2008: p. 168).

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[33] On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the_contract.html retrieved 04/02/09.

[34] On line at:
http://www.faz.net/s/Rub117C535CDF414415BB243B181B8B60AE/Doc~E820611E333D84231B17D27DDC5EC8El1~ATpl~Ecommon~Scontent.html retrieved 10/04/2009.

Victory over the peasant rebellion becomes apparent from the Bundschuh flag that Müntzer has let sink to the ground. The Bundschuh movement was a loosely linked peasant confederation of localized peasant rebellions in Southwest Germany during the 15th and 16th centuries. It was so called because of the peasant shoe or Bundschuh—shoe of brotherhood the rebels displayed on their flag.

Fig 34 Detail / Müntzer-Bundschuh - *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

The symbol appears in an earlier sequence in the mural on a banner depicting the crucifixion with the shoe attached to Christ's feet. The banner is held aloft on a wooden pole by a man seated among a gathering conspiring rebellion. The Bundschuh is linked to Providence and the Sovereignty of God through the flames emerging above their heads thereby articulating Engel's understanding of the specificity of the class struggle of the time as one which although appearing to bear religious earmarks, ". . . if the interests, requirements and demands of the various classes hid themselves behind a religious has formed out of a cosmic turbulence in the upper regions of the mural; messengers emerge from the crowd moving off into a wilderness, reminiscent of the 14th Century English theologian and early dissident in the Catholic Church, John Wycliffe's preaching to live according to the ways of the apostles

through the example of the crucified one. Below this scene a figure in a loin cloth with a blue ribbon tugs at a wooden tree stump. Tübke has based this figure on a copper engraving by Sebald Beham entitled 'Impossible'.

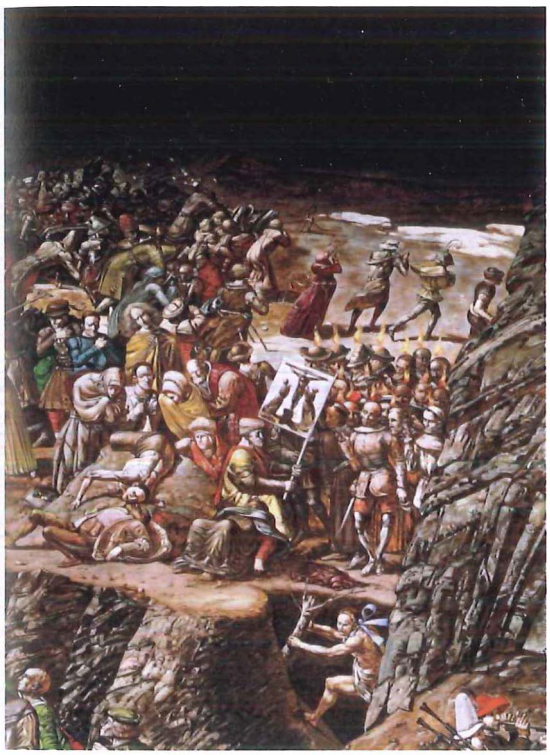

Fig. 35 Detail / 'Impossible' - *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

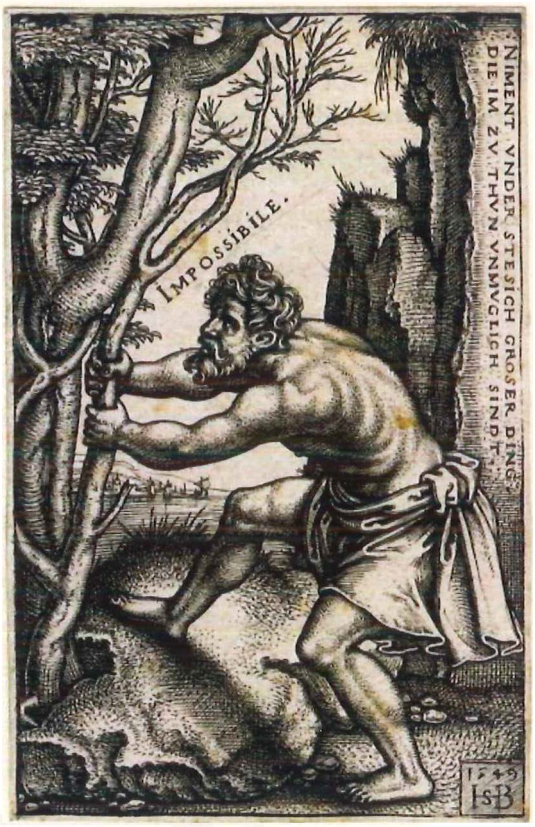

Fig. 36 Sebald Beham's engraving 'Impossibile'

Groys argues cogently that the famous assertion 'it is fulfilled' cannot be removed from the world simply by pointing to the world's actual injustices and inadequacies. One speaks of the end of history in the sense of the identity between "anti-utopia and utopia, of hell and paradise, of damnation and salvation when one chooses the present over the future because one believes that the future will no longer bring anything new beyond what one has already seen in the past" (Groys, 2008: p. 168). It is precisely this choice that Linde makes when he writes as follows:

> Below the group of conspirators, a naked figure with a blue ribbon reaches for a dead tree trunk - an allusion to a copper cut by Sebald Beham from 1549, which likewise depicts a man trying to rip out trees. The figure can be seen to represent the pointlessness of an action. The symbol of impossibility begins in the parallel between the figure at the tree and the crucifix on the flag — clearly attributable to the Bundschuh peasant rebellious movement of that time. When understood against the background of the frailty of the human character the movement had to be without a chance of success in achieving its objective of social utopia.

However, he goes one step further and suggests that the peasant rebels were driven by self interest and not a vision of Christian utopia and argues that linking the Bundschuh movement to Christian utopia was an impossibility the recognition of which was necessarily extracted by torture.

> This also explains why, in Tübke's painting, Christ succumbs to the devil's temptation and jumps head-first off the cliff, seduced by all the power, riches and splendour of the world. Müntzer, too, had to accept this in the end as this also brought him in his ~~last~~ confession recorded shortly before his execution and under torture—to the disappointed conclusion that each and every one (rebelling peasant) was self seeking and was not concerned for the true justification of Christianity.[1]

[1] Unterhalb der Verschwörergruppe greift eine nackte Gestalt mit blauer Schleife nach einem (abgestorbenen) baumstumpf. In Anlehnung an einen 1549 geschaffenen Kupferstich von Sebald Beham, in dem gleichfallsgezeigt wird, wie ein Mann versucht, Bäume auszureißen, kann sie al seine Allegorie für die Aussichtslosigkeit einer Handlung gelten. Ausgehend von der Parallelität des Baumes zum Kreuz auf der Fahne bezieht sich das Sinnbild des Unmöglichen in seiner Zuordnung zur Bundschuhversammlung eindeutig auf die bauerliche Aufstandsbewegung jener Zeit, die vor dem Hintergrung der Schwächen des menschlichen Charakters in ihrer utopisch-sozialen Zielsetzung von vornherein ohne Erfolgschance bleiben musste. So erklärt sich auch, warum in Tübkes Bild Christus der Versuchung des Teufels erliegt und kopfüber vom Felsen springt, verführt von all der Macht, dem Reichtum und der Herrlichkeit der Welt. Dass dies nicht nur die Obrigkeit betrifft, zeight sich an vielen Stellen in disem Bild. Auch Müntzer hat dies am ende einsehen müssen, was ihn in seinem letzten Bekenntnis, aufgenommen unter der Folter kurz vor seiner Hinrichtung auch zudem enttäuschten Fazit brachte, „das ein wider seinen eygen nutz mehr gesucht, dann recht fertigung der christenheit – Gerd Lindner, 2006. pp. 45/46. My translation

But of course the choice here made is the victory of free market capitalism – the transfer from the idyll of universal expropriation following the end of the class struggle into the ultimate resignation with respect to the depressing infinity in which the same struggles for distribution, appropriation and privatization are permanently repeated. It thus introduces a new element into the mural in order to sustain the reading: the element of renunciation.

Hans Sebald Beham, his brother Barthel, Georg Pencz, all from Nuremberg, and Heinrich Aldegrever and Albrecht Altdorfer were leading members of a group of German printmakers known as the The Little Masters (*Kleinmeister*) who worked in the first half of the 16th century, primarily in engraving. They specialized in very small finely detailed prints, some no larger than a postage stamp. Pencz, the Beham brothers and a woodcarver Hieronymus Andreae were imprisoned in 1525 for spreading the radical views of Müntzer and for asserting disbelief in baptism, Christ and transubstantiation. Aspects separating the Bundschuh and Beham's 'Impossible' are best illustrated by exploring their various priorities and the concepts mediating them; hence avoiding methods of induction and deduction. Collaging together images as in the above examples fails to address the historical significance and specificity of their meaning; instead trips into the trap of searching for examples which mediate the required outcome.

A closer look at the "Masters of the Little Engraving" (*Kleinmeister*) reveals how the radicalized politics and theology of the Reformation influenced artistic practices and forms. Sebald Beham's 1549 miniature copper engraving shows a muscular man trying to pull a tree trunk from the earth. It is entitled – *Impossibile* and contains text, which reads: (*Niment vnder stesich groser ding die im zv thvn vnmvglich sindt*) "No one dares a greater thing than attempting to do the impossible" (my translation). Such a statement confronts the viewer with a morass of paradoxes: how does one undertake that which cannot, by definition, be done? Moreover, who would ever attempt such a thing? The rhetorical statement answers itself: no one. However on closer scrutiny new meanings and meta-meanings spring from its internal tensions and open the way for a cautious hermeneutics of emerging Reformation morality. Beham's tiny engraving does not only present the viewer with a conundrum. Rather, more broadly viewed, it reveals a dominating concern of Reformation Germany, namely the discourse concerning the freedom of the human will, its role in salvation and an embittered fluctuation between necessity and freedom. This rendering of the Renaissance print is tied to the debates surrounding its physical production, namely, a barrage of Christian writings about human agency, freedom, arrogance, salvation, and indolence that pivoted on the exchange between the humanist intellectual Erasmus von Rotterdam whose work 'On Free Will', was counterattacked by Luther's 'On the Bondage of the Will' and which produced multiple factions. And it was Erasmus who suspected that Luther's radical reforms would create

a spiritually underwritten justification for the peasant uprising throughout Germany, ferment Anabaptist disturbances, and initiate a wave of iconoclasm. It is exactly this last point—iconoclasm where an image such as Sebald Beham's enters a new interpretive dimension. Images produced by a number of Reformation-sympathetic engravers, painters, and sculptors become symbols for the artist living through these conflicted times; that is, they are allegories of group identity affecting a group of Reformation-age German artists whose artistic identities were formed by dissent, such as Jorg Ratgeb, Jörg Pencz, and the brothers Barthel and Sebald Beham. All of these artists in their various ways, the art historian, Mitchel Merback suggests, "embraced a radical dream of 'Christian liberty' that was at first Lutheran, and then anti-Lutheran, but then soon retreated from both, disillusioned and searching." In so doing, he argues, "they adopted, in a strikingly modern fashion, a kind of disenchanted conservatism in which a compensatory 'artistic freedom,' and a newly liberalized conception of the image, encouraged them to put forth novel interpretations of biblical, classical, and vernacular subjects." [2] This means that the *Kleinmeister*, those masters of the small, exemplified in the 'Impossible' work of Sebald Beham, helped to etch out a new cultural and psychic space, allowing a new sort of self-reflexivity to blossom. And in so doing they privileged at the very least paradox over moralizing and ethics over theology. Far from doing the impossible, a generation of German Renaissance artists, then, placed invigorated, individualized invention into closer reach.

And the deployment of this imagery as visual indexical documentation of the Reformation in the mural endorses the link the world of art had provided to the peasants rebellion. The previously despised and caricatured peasants were vividly and sympathetically depicted by a formidable group of artists: Dürer, Till Riemenschneider, Lucas Cranach, Urs Graf, Jörg Ratgeb, Matthew Grünewald, Nicklaus Manuel and the Beham brothers. The image of the peasant 'captured' the art world. The so called 'Petrarca Meister' has the peasants carrying the whole world on their backs; the great roots of the tree on which the various estates of society perch are so interwoven with the figures of the two peasants as to be indistinguishable from them, and at the summit of the tree, again, two peasants are sitting. Whether at dance, at work or, like Dürer's peasant woman, in tears, they emerge with a new found dignity which is paralleled by their prominent role in Reformation dialogues and pamphlets. When Dürer shows John the Baptist preaching, it is to an audience of ordinary folk, including women and children in the woods on the margins of civilized society. Children and women are also prominent in the etchings of the Beham brothers. It is no coincidence therefore that the artist Tübke shows Müntzer preaching to an audience of

[2] On line at http://www.americanacademy.de/home/program/past/blog/2009/03/06/impossible_from_dissent_to_disenchantment_in_the_german_renaissance_print/384/detail/60/ retrieved 05/06/09.

common folk, including women and children, in an area sheltered from the Tower of Babyl with a peasant bearing a shoe (the bundschuh) on a pole nearby.

However, the critical search for comparative examples emerging in contemporary accounts points to an unresolved conflict in the mural that lies between the associative inventions that Tübke brings to the signifiers of the past and the logical development that he builds into the mural. The signs and themes are mostly indexical; they stand unequivocally for the Reformation, the relationship is not based on mere resemblance. In certain respects the signs are iconic – they are 'like' the signifier-Reformation; the mannerisms of the figures resemble it and are used as a sign of it. For example Tübke's numerous references to the medieval *Dance of Death* which was depicted by the medieval artist Bernt Notke in 1473 whose painting was commissioned after the plague epidemic of the 14th Century. It had 24 figures, which were led into the dance by emaciated corpses draped in a shroud. In the background we could see a bucolic landscape and, far away, Lübeck city and its harbour. It begins with a skeleton/corpse wearing a hat and playing the flute. Another skeleton, carrying a coffin, plucks at the pope's robe and leads him into the dance. Then come the emperor, the empress, the cardinal, the king, the bishop, the duke, the abbot, the squire, the Carthusian, the mayor, the canon, the nobleman, the doctor, the usurer, the chaplain, the state official, the sacristan, the merchant, the hermit, the peasant, the young man, the young girl and the child in his cradle. Tübke uses these as shorthand transcriptions for his skeletons, dancing and dragging away the living.

Fig. 37 Detail /Dance of death (1) - *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

This example is not accidental. The association of the thematic substance of the mural with the imagery of the Reformation is widespread, often run through with irony. We can see for example that the 'dance of death' is not solely the property of death, but also of the nobility which dances with careless aplomb around an unworldly and bizarre creature fronting the gallows holding a hanged corpse.

Fig. 38 Detail / Dance of death (2)

- Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany

Many of the significant themes arise in abbreviated transcriptions from the block prints, pamphlets and paintings of Albrecht Dürer, Cranach, Bruegel, the Beham brothers, Hieronymus Bosch, and others. Where he does draw on images from these master artists he structures his own inventive associations around themes which were prevalent during the Reformation. In one instance he has used a woodcut by Hans Schaüfelein, printed on the title cover of Hans von Leonrod's book "Hymelwag und Hellwag" in

which a feudal lord is collecting tithes, a goose, a goat and a basket of eggs from a peasant woman. Hans Schäufelein was an assistant to Dürer. His works often imitated those of Dürer. His works are characterized by graceful narration, and his types, though seldom accurately drawn, are attractive although lacking visual power. Tübke has absorbed the narrative quality of Schäufelein's woodcut but invested it with his own commentary. The peasants in Tübke's work, poor and hard offer their tithes to a lavish bourgeoisie feast. A young burgers daughter looks back with arrogant derision at the peasants kowtowing and offering the fruits of their labours, a goose, a goat and a basket of eggs. This is a disturbing contestation and points angrily towards economic inequality. And while this ironic sign seems to signify one thing, alongside it we find the signifier of the dance of death embodied in the nobility. However the imagery is susceptible to cliché, which accounts for its susceptibility to a contemporary coding of the 'universal' theme of recurrence, one where 'the dance around the golden calf and justice is a pipe dream' remains a permanent recurring theme of human history.

Fig. 39 Detail /social classes - *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

The reunified German re-contextualization of the mural and the panorama fails on a simple semiotic basis to recognize that on the contrary the mural explores a set of cultural texts, which represent the past to the present. This is achieved denotatively through the adaptation of the medieval style of painting and the indexing of commonly recognized symbolism. Examples are many and include the Ship of Fools, Jonah and the Whale, The Tower of Babel, The Seven Deadly Sins, Pontius Pilot and Cirrus. Tübke's idiom deploys a number of artistic styles such as late-medieval German and Mannerism, and relies on an

imaginative abbreviation of historical visual sources, such as the woodcut illustrations found in sixteenth century broadsheet pamphlets. The idiom and much of the content shows the influence of artists such as Dürer, Cranach, Barthel and Hans Sebald Beham, Bruegel, Hieronymus Bosch, Goltzius and El Greco, and thinkers such as Luther, Sebastian Brant and the Cranach workshop. For example Tübke has quoted the Baroque painter Hendrik Goltzius's engraving of Icarus, which is a skillfully drawn miniature study of individual character in a circular frame showing a strong swing of line. Aside from Icarus suspended in air, the engraving lacks any further metaphorical references, such as those in the Icarus painting by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. In his painting a blazing light dominates the sky contrasted with the earthly and honest activities of farmers ploughing the ground and shepherding sheep; and Icarus is associated with these specifics with his upside down legs sinking into the sea. In the Early Bourgeois mural however these elements are brought together with Icarus shown against a bright sun, his feathers melting away while below the battle takes place and below that intellectuals and artists from the Reformation are positioned around a fountain.

Fig. 40 Detail / associative inventions – *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

This typifies a simple associative invention that Tübke has developed illustratively and successfully. The sheer brilliance of the technical skill, combined with the complexity of themes, a breathtaking visual confrontation blinds one to its academic dryness. The mural has been executed in dense and intricate illustrative and graphic figurative realism; it contains concentrated narrative detail with the figures, their dress, appearance, expressions, life circumstances, social specificity, all conveyed in minute and accurate detail. The allegorical character of the images problemitize the mural's narrative and yet it is the multifaceted detail that draws the viewer into participation with the protagonists and the events confronting them in a theatric engagement, woven in such a manner that the characters develop complex dimensions.

However the mural as a whole has been oddly plotted. It is driven through with an antic disposition and inordinate length; by the end of the 'tour' and although the mural demands the opposite, the mind fixes not on detail but on generalized and containable concepts. Its thematic substance is confusing; where it appears to make a statement, the force of the image is crowded out by a multiplicity of overlapping images only for the image to re-emerge in mutated form elsewhere as for example in the numerous crucifixes throughout the mural.

The glue binding these concepts is the Reformation as the prime signifier; the visually compelling battle scene underlines the uprising as the component which saturates the signifier. The battle scene forms the principal visual focus of the mural and its central argument. It is dominated by Müntzer. In this scene, Müntzer is prominently silhouetted against an open field. He is arched by a rainbow. I visualized the mural without the rainbow – which brings the battle scene and its impact strongly into focus. Below the battle scene in line with the central figure of Thomas Müntzer, we see a group of twenty figures standing around a Renaissance fountain separated from the battle by a wall of shrubs. These figures in this strangely peaceful oasis on the edge of the raging battle are the great men of the era, the giants of the time from church and religion, literature and art, philosophy and science, business and manufacturing. A central trio stands out: Albrecht Dürer, Martin Luther and Lucas Cranach; others include: Hans Sachs, Sebastian Brant, Philipp Melanchthron, Erasmus von Rotterdam, Ulrich von Hutten, Nikolaus Kopernikus, Paracelsus, Christopher Columbus, Johann Gutenberg, and Jakob Fugger.

For the GDR the Reformation was a complex signifier of class struggle and East German nationalism as a consequence of the struggle theorized among others by scholars Smirin, Steinmetz, Zimmermann, Kautsky, and of course from the writings Engels, of which the Panorama and the mural provided visual recognition. This is achieved firstly by means of the medieval style deployed, which by invoking the art of the Reformation, opens a Foucauldian meta-epistemic window into the underlying arrangements that make knowledge of the Reformation possible; secondly the content of the mural is

imbued with a revolutionary necessity that emerges from the overall sense of unresolved turmoil that is contained in the overlapping multitude of depicted events. There are severe limits on the ability to invent classics. They may be endlessly re-edited, reinterpreted and submerged by commentaries, yet in this manner the GDR has re-scripted the classic convention of the Reformation and established a dialogical relation with it.

A prominent feature of the mural is a translucent Globe positioned above a hill overlooking a large meadow. Various groups are gathered in the meadow including the Ship of Fools. This satire of vices and follies which has long been a fixture of Western literature and art is found in the Early Bourgeois mural on bare ground. The depiction is based on Albrecht Dürer's front cover copper engraving on Sebastian Brant's '*Narrenshiff*' (Ship of Fools) which was published in 1494. The context of the allegory, which depicts a vessel populated by human inhabitants who are deranged, frivolous, or oblivious, passengers aboard a ship without a pilot, and seemingly ignorant of their own direction, is a Reformation concept of foolishness which was a frequently used trope to legitimate criticism, as also used by Erasmus in his *In Praise of Folly* and Martin Luther in his *Address to the Christian Nobility*.

In keeping with a literal transposition of Dürer's image and quite unlike the Ship painted by Hieronymus Bosch which contains imbecilic bantering and gestures, the Early Bourgeois mural depicts the ship grounded in the meadow on dry land. It is full of inflexible old men. They appear not to recognize their ridiculous situation and take no notice of events around them – the Bundschuh alongside the boat, the mother with her child, the musicians behind the boat. Hence its presence in the mural is merely an indexical mode of reference. But there is an obverse effect to this understanding of the Ship of Fools that emerges from Michel Foucault's examination of the ideas, practices, institutions, art and literature relating to madness. In *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* he argues that with the gradual disappearance of leprosy in the Middle Ages, madness came to occupy this excluded position. The Ship of Fools is a literary version of one such exclusionary practice, the practice of sending people away in ships. But, he argues, during the Renaissance madness was regarded as an "all abundant phenomenon" because humans could not come close to the Reason of God, being weak to desires and dissimulation. Therefore the insane, understood as those who had come too close to God's Reason were accepted in the middle of society. It is not until the 17th century, in a movement which Foucault famously describes as the Great Confinement, that 'unreasonable' people systematically were locked away and institutionalized. It was according to Foucault only in the 18th Century that madness came to be seen as the obverse of Reason (Foucault, 1988). The Ship of Fools thus reveals a dominating concern of the Reformation Germany, namely the discourse concerning the role of institutional power derived from Gods Reason. Accordingly Tübke's inventive signifier not only demonstrates the age of the

Reformation it also, more importantly, revitalizes our understanding of the Baroque world and in so doing opens up the viewers mind to further research.

Fig. 41 Detail / Ship of Fools – *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

The motifs in the meadow are derived mostly from polemical pamphlets published at the time of the reformation by the Cranach workshop and others who sought to undermine the authority of the pope and the Catholic Church with vulgar humour. In the meadow in the lower end of the mural a monk, a purveyor of indulgences, has been strung up on a tree and is being mocked; alongside the monk is an effigy of the pope (metonym for the Roman Catholic Church) depicted as an ass with the body of a woman and the head of a donkey wearing the papal crown. This is a particularly evocative image.

Fig. 42 Detail / The use of imagery as polemic
– Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany

This theme is given creative power across the panoramic vault where the pope with the ears of an ass and dressed in a bishops cloak is seen perched on a floating wreath of demons and devils dancing around him and presenting him with the papal tiara. This image is modelled on a woodcut from the title page of one of Luther's pamphlets aimed against the pope titled '*Against the Papacy of Rome founded by the Devil*'. These images identify the medieval custom of the Feast of Fools variant of carnival, marked by tomfoolery and the reversal of roles. The festival was firmly rooted in pagan custom, and in medieval times witnessed buffoonery and ridiculous ceremony in which power, dignity and impunity was briefly challenged and overturned. Mockery and derision was directed at the church, the pope, archbishop, bishop, abbot who would be consecrated with names such as *Archbishop of Dolts*. The extravagances associated with it were constantly the object of sweeping condemnations of the medieval Church. Of

course the Reformation contestation with the Catholic Church was not carnival, and the mural points to this in the insurrection of the peasant war.

This image of the mocked pope is located above a martyr strung upon a wheel. In the higher reaches of the mural, a connection is drawn to Luther, who with one face observes the public burning of books, in reference to his condemnation of the Roman Catholic Church codex of Canon Law and with a second face observes the falling St Anthony, a hermit who was tempted (unsuccessfully) to reject the true faith. Down at the lower edge of the mural alongside the hanging monk, is a group of figures with animal heads. They are identifiable figures from the Reformation mainly adversaries of Luther, – Johann Eck, Luther's principle adversary whom Luther called a pig (hence caricatured as a pig), Thomas Murner (cat) and Jacob Lemp (goat), the papal inquisitor Jakob van Hoogstraeten, the king of rats and Johannes Cochlaeus whose name has been lampooned through his depiction with a cooking spoon and a snail on his head. The group are playing the game of nooses, where each ties a noose to the other and pulls until one topples over. The group is stylistically based on the descent of the cross. The pope is playing the role of Christ. He is losing this battle and is slumping to the ground in imitation of Christ's descent. Luther is tied into the group but has raised the crucifix in defiance. However, Tübke has not spared Luther. He has already depicted him with two faces. One sees in the battle scene a flag with the word *Fryheit* (Freedom) printed upon it raised among the throng of defeated peasants. This flag and the font of the word *Fryheit* is a copy of a woodcut illustration in Engels *The Peasant War in Germany*. But irony is never far from Tübke. Thus the word *Fryheit* is intertwined with the German Franciscan monk, satirist and adversary of Luther, Thomas Murner whose polemic satirized Luther's rejection of authority as Freedoms Fool.

Tübke's imagery is not particularly vivid when compared to its source material. For example his globe has been modelled on the globe which Hieronymus Bosch painted on the exterior panels of his famous triptych T*he Garden of Earthly Delights*. Bosch's Garden is a powerful and surreal transportation of the world from the third day of its creation through the tranquillity of paradise contained on the left panel, the dissipation of earthly delights on the centre panel into the terrifying realm of hell on the remaining panel, sometimes described as one of the seven most frightening pictures on earth.[i]

When the triptych's wings are closed, the design of the outer panels becomes visible. The outer panels are rendered in a bland ~~g~~reen gray grisaille, a common practice found on Netherlandish altarpieces serving to highlight the splendid colour inside. The outer panels are generally thought to depict the Creation of the world, showing greenery beginning to clothe the still-pristine Earth. God, wearing a crown similar to a papal tiara (a common convention in Netherlandish painting), is visible as a tiny figure at the upper left. Bosch shows God as the father sitting with a Bible on his lap, creating the Earth in a passive manner by divine fiat. Above him is inscribed a quote from Psalm XXXIII reading *Ipse dixit, et facta*

sunt: ipse mandávit, et creáta sunt—For he spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. The Earth is encapsulated in a transparent sphere recalling the traditional depiction of the created world as a crystal sphere held by God or Christ. Refracting light, it hangs suspended in the cosmos, which is shown as an impermeable darkness, whose only other inhabitant is God himself.

Tübke's globe is fractured but holds the crucifixion, an indiscernible human throng and the eye of God. Seen through the fracture is a splendidly coloured landscape, but otherwise the opaque globe blurs the interior. The fracture unhinges the insulation of the reality within the globe structured around these iconic images and shifts to an existential concern in the form of the figures fronting onto the globe. They are an angel and a rough and grubby man dressed in a baroque tunic, cap and with a green halo above his head. The angel, wizened and unpleasant if not of death then of the profane, kneeling and carrying palm leaves (a traditional symbol of martyrdom) clearly frightens the man receiving it. There is a rather obscure reference to the annunciation that Tübke has rescripted in this scene with the figures representing the archangel Gabriel and Mary.

Fig. 43 Detail / the Globe

- Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany

The conceptual leap from the model emerging in Bosch's painting paradise, the ruination of the world through humankind's Fall and the condemnation, surface in Tübke as the recognition of oneself as creaturely and the transcendental source of all knowledge; it will hear nothing of the voice of revelation. The grubby man is the investigator and thinker who fixes himself upon and intensely scrutinizes the domain of objects. The world has left the globe and become a text where social relationships will be

formed on material interactions and not predicated on the Word. He looks down on the profane world as does that of Dürer's *Melancholy*. The halo around his head draws attention to the inner life of the mind which is where the melancholic resides. Paracelsus, whose investigations into astrology are investigated by Tübke in the fish image further along the mural, described Adam as the first born, who possesses 'creaturely mournfulness'. Similarly the world of the baroque is god forsaken; it is no longer sustained by the insulation that the globe once provided. There is a revelatory vision of the misery of mankind in its creaturely condition.

Writing in his *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida observes that there is the temptation to add an aporetic postscript to Freud's remark that links three traumas inflicted on human narcissism when it is thus decentred: after the *psychological trauma* (the power of the unconscious over the conscious ego discovered by psychoanalysis), after the *biological trauma* (the animal descent of man discovered by Darwin), after the *cosmological trauma* (the Copernican Earth is no longer the centre of the universe). He writes:

> The aporia stems from the fact that there is no longer any name or teleology for determining the Marxist coup and its subject. Freud thought he knew what man and his narcissism were; the Marxist blow is as much the projected unity of a thought and a labour movement sometimes in a messianic or eschatological form, as it is the history of the totalitarian world.
>
> — Derrida, 1994: pp. 121/122.

Although the 'psychological" lesion produced by the blow of psychoanalysis has "traumatized the body of mankind's history", the blow struck enigmatically in the name of Marx, also "accumulates and gathers together the other three" (traumas *psychological, biological, cosmological).* It thus "presupposes them today ... it carries beyond them by carrying them out. The century of Marxism will have been that of the techno-scientific and effective decentring of the earth, of geopolitics..." (pp. 121-122).

Decentred, Tübke's transformed Mary (the startled man) gazes at the profane world in the valley below, providing a conceptual mediation with the present century. This emerges from the unity of thought, the materiality of conflict and the implications of social organization inhering to the mural. It is thus no surprise that Müntzer stands alone in the battle scene as does this figure outside the globe. Neither is surrounded by angels or devils or religious phenomena, but by the materiality of conflict in messianic form. There is hence in the mural the possibility of a conceptual identification with fate, melancholy, historical time, allegory, ruination and decentring of subject and politics. These links help to give the work a contemporary meaning and simultaneously reify the Reformation in the present. However, when

the meaning invested in the imagery is purely conventional so that the imagery is framed as an illustration of the conventional text, the mural's agency is mediated out. This absence is precisely the outcome of contemporary argument. For example according to the CD produced by the Panorama's curatorial staff the fracture in the globe is rhetorical, possibly indicating the split in Christianity between Catholicism and Protestantism, or possibly the split between the rich and poor. The mural would have been subject to many private comments by innumerable readers in a continuous chain of discourse in which meaning could be assimilated or contested. However the curatorial intrusion into the mural constitutes a specifically dialogical text produced in a capitalist society in which its reading of the original text is reclaimed and incorporated into the text itself, hence achieving a double blow – at once destroying the efficacy of class struggle and simultaneously raising the profile of the ruling bourgeois canon.

The theologian Philipp Melanchthon, a collaborator with Martin Luther and intellectual leader of the Lutheran reformation was an influential designer of educational systems. Together with Luther, who had declared that the people obsessed with the seven sins were wicked, even more so than the papacy, they both denounced what they saw as the exaggerated cult of the saints, the idolatrous adoration of the Host, and the coercion of the conscience in the sacrament of penance that nevertheless could not offer certainty of salvation. He established anatomy in arts courses in line with the protestant emphasis on the relation between body and soul. He set out to replace magical practice with the doctrine of Providence. However, he also theorized an acceptable notion of astrology, in spite of its heathen associations, to assert the providence and sovereignty of God and to counter the radical enthusiasts who, listening to the spirit speaking within them, threatened the Lutheran revolution by making themselves the authority before God. Theophrastus Paracelsus, more properly Theophrastus Phillippus Aureolus Bombastus von Hohenheim, astrologer, alchemist and physician pioneered the use of chemicals and minerals in medicine. His hermetical views were that sickness and health in the body relied on the harmony of man (the microcosm) and Nature (macrocosm) in line with the Hellenistic philosophy of Stoicism, underlining a stern attitude to emotion. As a result of this hermetical idea of harmony, the universe's macrocosm was represented in every person as a microcosm. According to the insights at the time, there were Seven planets on the sky, Seven metals on Earth and Seven centres (or major organs) in Man - Seven was a special number. Everything was heavenly and closely interrelated. Diseases were caused by poisons brought to earth from the stars.

Tübke incorporates the medieval fascination with astrology in the large fish or whale painted to the side of Müntzer and the Tower of Babel, emerging from the winter scene and the scene of the pit of the seven deadly sins. The mural's fish has a human being in its belly. The sun and moon shine on the surface of its skin. The symbols of the planets are visible. At the moons lower horn one sees Jupiter,

Mars, the constellation of the planets. This theme which emerges strategically nearby the first appearance of Müntzer appears to relate to Müntzer as visionary. Ernst Bloch, philosopher in his *Thomas Müntzer as a Theologian of the Revolution* has commented that the old prophesy which hung over Müntzer appeared to be coming true '...the fullness of the waters was approaching' (Bloch, 1969) . In 1524, the prophetic year of disaster, the planets were all sucked into the constellation of Pisces. However Jupiter was in conjunction with the peasants star (the morning star). Having failed to gain the support of the rulers for his reform plans, Müntzer grasped the seething discontent among the peasantry to lead the rebellion.

Fig. 44 Detail / Jonah and the Whale
- Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany

This conception of the whale is not the original way of seeing it. Jonah is the prototype of the prophet who comes to learn that personal prophesies are always subservient to the higher order. Biblically (Jonah 1), God sent Jonah to preach at Ninevah, but rather than do so he took a ship to Tarshish to 'flee from the presence of the Lord'. The Lord sent a storm; the other sailors rightly attribute it to Jonah's presence. They throw him overboard where he is swallowed by a large fish (presumed to be a whale). After three

days and nights Jonah acknowledged to the Lord that salvation is of the Lord whereupon the fish vomited out Jonah onto dry land.

The discourse around human agency and the role of authority was also present in the pamphlet literature produced by the Cranach workshop and others of the Reformation. These pamphlets became an influential vehicle of propaganda and a stimulus to the defiance of church anachronism and exploitation. Luther himself had placed a distance between himself and the peasantry and like the church itself appeared to be more in harmony with the undeservedly affluent rather than the poor. This further marginalized the impoverished against which the pamphlet literature reacted. Further intensity was provided by the eschatological perspective widely adopted in the protest literature. A powerful atmosphere of expectancy was created in which the multiple traumas of present existence and the hardship of starvation and deprivation constituted a final test pending the day of judgement and return of a beatific age. Short tracts containing prophecies concerning astrological phenomena were a potent element in the popular pamphlet literature. The title page comprising a lengthy and ominous title, together with a large woodcut burgeoning with lurid symbolism constituted an instrument of propaganda in itself. These pamphlets were the Prophesies, prognostications or *Practicas*. Tübke has modeled his fish rather exactly on the woodcut print by an unknown Petrarca Meister on the book cover of Leonhard Reymann's Practica *About the great and diverse conjunction of the planets* which shows the ideal world being born from the fish and prognosticated upon by clerics, kings and peasants alike. Tübke has altered its context, however by removing the prognostications of peasants and others; instead we are drawn to the figure of Müntzer addressing the peasants below the Tower of Babel.

Rather than the iconic symbolism so easily transferred to this signifier, allegory will enliven interpretation through a proliferation of absence. Hence, by way of illustration, decay may constitute the discrepancy between ideology and actuality; on one hand the fish is a religious symbol, dating back to the *Ichthus* symbol of ancient Greece. [ii] It is also a symbol for the subconscious mind and subterranean levels of awareness not usually manifest in 'waking' reality. Then there is pollution and 'dead' matter. Fish smell and rot, as do religious/political ideologies (locally and globally). It is through allegory's multiple possibilities that the discrepancy between ideal and actuality becomes discernable.

The materiality of war is represented pictorially, vividly although not brutally in the mural. The battle scene contrasts with the cultural demands which otherwise mostly dominate the mural. The hanging of the catholic priest and the papacy is likewise a powerful material image. They may be contrasted with the depiction of the Tower of Babel that has been read as a hen linked to an oval image randomly placed nearby in the snow. According to this reading the birth of the ideal of communism that the hen would otherwise produce cannot occur because the egg lies in frozen snow. However, this oval image was

invented by Tübke, who is reported as saying he had no idea why he painted it he simply had an urge to do so. This reading is founded on an imaginary likeness the Tower has to a chicken and to the egg shape. Its denoted symbolism is thus derived from forms invented by the critic. In fact the form of the Tower of Babyl is based on a painting of the tower by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. This rhetoric resides in banal symbolism and fails to inhere in the unity and immediacy with which it expresses an idea. A symbol is not dispersed across a plethora of disparate referents as we find occurring here. Walter Benjamin has already shown that it is concentrated intensely on a single image as a 'momentary totality'.

The Tower of Babel has biblical origins quite different from these readings. Genesis Chapter 11, Verse 9 reads, 'Therefore is the name of it called Babel, because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth'. In his critical assessment of *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Walter Benjamin argues that confusion of signs can be explained by the Fall which is the descent from the purity of Adamic naming into the 'empty word, into the abyss of prattle' With the Fall and the multiplicity of language begins history as the profusion and confusion of signs i.e. Babel (Benjamin, 1998). Tübke has positioned Müntzer below the Tower addressing a seated crowd raptly listening to him. For Benjamin writing post the Fall, human beings continue to name things, but they do so arbitrarily, without reference to the Word. Silent nature is designated and is subject to the 'prattle' of human beings, and the plethora of human languages results in a multitude of 'names' with things being misnamed and 'overnamed'. Hence, the search for 'truth' is the search for proper naming wherein name and thing correspond perfectly. Certainly Müntzer and the peasant rebels were seeking change, a return to the ideal world. Müntzer's sermons are peppered with quotations from the apocalyptic writings of the Old Testament, the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah that foretell the need to seek a better world. It is in this context of the conditions of the time (in Engels usage) that Müntzer, the revolutionary, attempted to organize social change. After all this is the peasant's rebellion resulting from their impoverishment, not from ideological cultural demands. A mistake in reading the signifiers in the mural is made when the cause of the insurrection is identified with the content of Müntzer's apocalyptic sermons and not with the peasant's impoverishment.

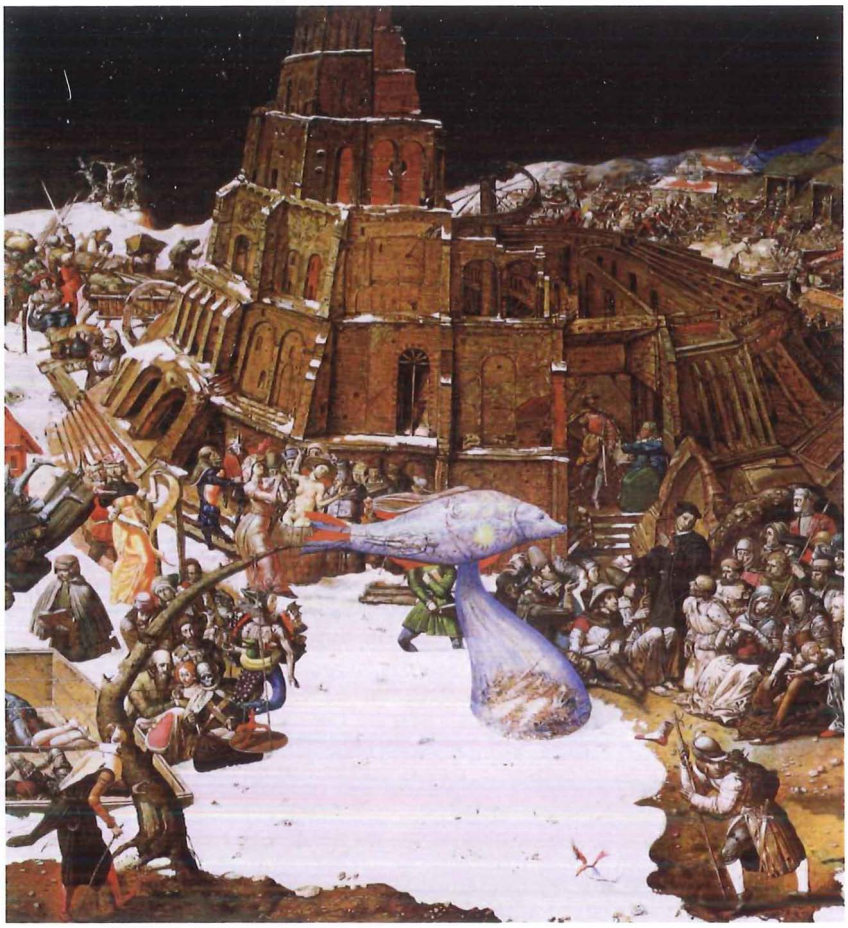

Fig. 45 Detail / Tower of Babyl

– Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany

The Mural – contextual origin

Underwriting the provocative spectacle of the mural is a visual dissertation on the Reformation. This becomes clear from a key quotation:

> My project 'Frankenhausen' was and is the metaphorical interpretation of an entire epoch, the economic, intellectual, religious ideas of the time. It was necessary to develop a visually convincing and captivating design worthy of the history and corresponding to the rich complexity of the events that at the same time would be a very personal visual creation[3]

[3] On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the_model_version.html retrieved 07/04/09

With the abandonment of the Borodino model and its parallel idealism the figurative realism of a particular battle-scene the illustration of an epochal event as a way of locking subsequent historical developments to a rigid narrative inevitably was squandered. Part of the mural's enigma rests not on its magical and unworldly representations but is found in the relationship of many of its images to history which are only ever allegorical, in the sense that they present fragments and broken shards of history without narrativizing them. It neither plunges us back into the midst of the historical periods depicted nor does it speak of memory of the events. The images, far from being hierarchically ranked, are piled up in a seemingly haphazard way one on the other. There *seems* to be no totalizing in mind as though the resuscitation of historical objects and facts is absolutely impossible. Hence one finds the GDR historians struggling with this foggy representation by finding it accurate yet difficult to comprehend: "The accuracy in detail is astonishing", noted the historians Bensig and Hoyer in their appraisal of 6 May 1981, "…it has a strong proximity to the actual historical event". But ". . . viewers will not always be able to comprehend the work", qualified one comment, "because of the heavy use of symbolic visual language and allegory, so that the ideas, contemporary criticism of existing relations, and psychology that lie concealed behind the picture will need to be broken down." [4] Tübke addressed this quandary by explaining that symbols and allegories would admittedly tax the viewer's ability for making associations, but would ultimately allow the degree of artistic density necessary to cope with such complex visual material (ibid). This suggests that Tübke understood the substance of the painting to arise not from a simple summation of the individual motifs, but rather from the power of expression and the dynamic relationships among the simultaneous modes of creation.

But of course the contextual origin and symbolic purpose of the mural as political propaganda should not be forgotten "a painting fulfilling the Politburo's desire for a panorama 'dedicated to the heroic struggle of the peasant movement led by Thomas Müntzer…'"[5] Its function was intended as a site of particular cultural significance. However, the inscription into life of this political purpose was cut short by the collapse of the East German state. Now practical considerations affect its longevity. Its sheer size is but one determinant for retaining it rather than bulldozing it as an icon of a failed regime. But it is not practical considerations alone which prolong its visibility. The reuniting of Germany is not concerned with the destruction of the nationalism of East Germany; it is concerned with the rejection of common ownership of the means of production and the penetration of new markets and resources for private ownership. This is the rationale of the 'peaceful revolution' theorized in the notion of *Wende*. *Wende* marks the complete process of change from a planned economy to the market economy and capitalism. It

[4] On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the_contract.html retrieved 04/02/09.

[5] The terms of the commission for the production of the mural: On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the contract.html retrieved 04/02/09.

encompasses several processes and events which later have become synonymous with the overall process. These processes and events are: the Peaceful revolution, a time of protest and demonstration, the fall of the Berlin wall, democratic elections and the process of German reunification.[6] This process of German national reconciliation has reconfigured the political context of the mural to the rhetoric of uniqueness—and difference—that legitimates it by praising it. Hence official Panorama literature contains the following strategic conclusions:

> Golo Mann confessed after visiting the panorama in 1987 that the painting had nothing to do with revolutionary history, class struggle, and historical propaganda, nor with nineteenth-century historical paintings, but that the sponsor apparently had nonetheless been wise enough to give the artist free rein. Indeed, it was even quite possible that "Werner Tübke with his Peasant War Panorama succeeded in saying farewell to the ideal of revolution", conjectured the Essen historian Heinz Dieter Kittsteiner as early as 1988. In the end, with amazing perseverance and drive, the artist achieved his goal, relentlessly pushing ahead with this chance-in-a-lifetime commission to engender a unique work of art (and ultimately his own museum) worlds removed from a traditional battle panorama, whose standard is not the degree of its correspondence to the actual course of history but to its own artistic laws.[7]

The articulation of this discourse is made possible by the complex semiotic structures of the imagery. The artist, the mural, the panorama, the commission, the contract, now appear in isolation from their dialogical context. This new context establishes new syntagms, new meanings but also suppresses the original semiotic context which made it a classic text and which is only legible for those who know the gist of the discourse that once surrounded it. Without this cultural capital, the text is opaque and incorporated into the 'new' version of the constituting dialogue, a different version of history. Scholars know where it originally stood but seem not to know why it mattered or what it might have meant. It is therefore not surprising to find that the mural has metamorphozed into a different form, one which transports the mural from its political context to that of an art canon for the elite through modes of realized sets of assumptions.

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[6] Sources The Foundation 'Haus der Geschichte die Bundesrepublik Deutschland. On line at: http://www.hdg.de/en/leipzig/exhibition/permanent-exhibition/a-tour-of-the-exhibition/peaceful-revolution/ retrieved 07/10/09.

[7] On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the_contract.html retrieved 04/02/09.

Panorama literature describes it this way:

> Its context is the fall of Man and divine judgement. This shows that the painter has chosen to present his subject not on the level of political or military history, but in a large intellectual historical context. That forms the pivotal structure of the whole painting.
>
> — ibid.

In this way the intellectual context of the mural is acknowledged but the political propaganda component is removed. Its representation therefore inside the art world assumes the absence of political motivation. And this means that the mural which was produced under non-market conditions has now become compatible with the commercial system of art production. In this way the balance of power between the economy and politics in art has become distorted. Its political effectiveness in other words is neutralized.

The failure of the East German state is equally the failure to distribute the Reformation as an integrated signifier of East German nationalism through the medium of the mural; where it was intended to oppose the west, it now paradoxically hails the west. Its appearance of a direct throwback to the Reformation as a source of western liberal Christianity is exactly the appeal of Tübke's painting to western critics. This development is unavoidable given the entire political system's conversion. This intrusion opens up a confrontation of the text with itself which assumes the form of an inquiry into the conditions of its own possibilities. The plethora of signification to be found in the mural produces an endless deconstruction of the fiction, crushing the narrative and radically decentring the viewer. And it is the imaginary relation between the Tübke who paints and the Tübke he paints of that is confounded with each proposition in the mural. Tübke seemed to have some notion of the ambiguity that he would introduce to the mural when he wrote:

> I dreamt my way through the texts, absorbed much only into my short-term memory, drew groups of figures, occasionally lost track of the goal, fragments later found their proper place. During this phase I feared, as the devil fears holy water, and rightfully so, any leap ahead to the compositional work. The task at hand was constant accumulation, nothing but accumulation, so that I could later dare to give birth spontaneously, once and for all, from my abundance without the need for later corrections.[8]

But as with Benjamin's reproduced artwork, the mural has lost its ~~aura~~ the here and now which passes the object along as something that has a self and an identity. And this loss results from its reproduction

[8] On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the_model_version.html retrieved 09/07/09.

caused by the mediation brought to bear upon it by the political process of reunification. It is virtual, ahistorical a commodity in the political market of German craftsmanship and aesthetic culture.

Various attempts have been made to secure a certainty of meaning through the compositional structure of the painting. Listening through the headphones provided to visitors a guided tour of the mural is provided by the curatorial staff; reference is made to the compositional structure of the battle scene. An imaginary axis forms a line from the rainbow's apex through the figures Icarus and Müntzer disappearing into the centre of the bottom fountain. A series of arches can be identified. The arch of the rainbow in turn arches over an empty field located behind Müntzer. A hedge arches over the figures at the fountain iterating the rainbows arch over Müntzer and over the battle; an arch is likewise formed by the hedge above the great figures of the Reformation, who likewise form an arch in front of the fountain. The fountain, concludes the script, completes the circle anticipated by the rainbow's arch. The fountain in turn echoes the form of the circle surrounding Icarus. According to this script the circularity is symbolic of a recurrence of the same, and given the logic of the representation of Icarus in the circle with Müntzer, an evaluation is drawn of the inevitability of failure that attaches to the reckless pursuit of ideology above Reason, liberal humanism and creativity reflected in the figures around the fountain.

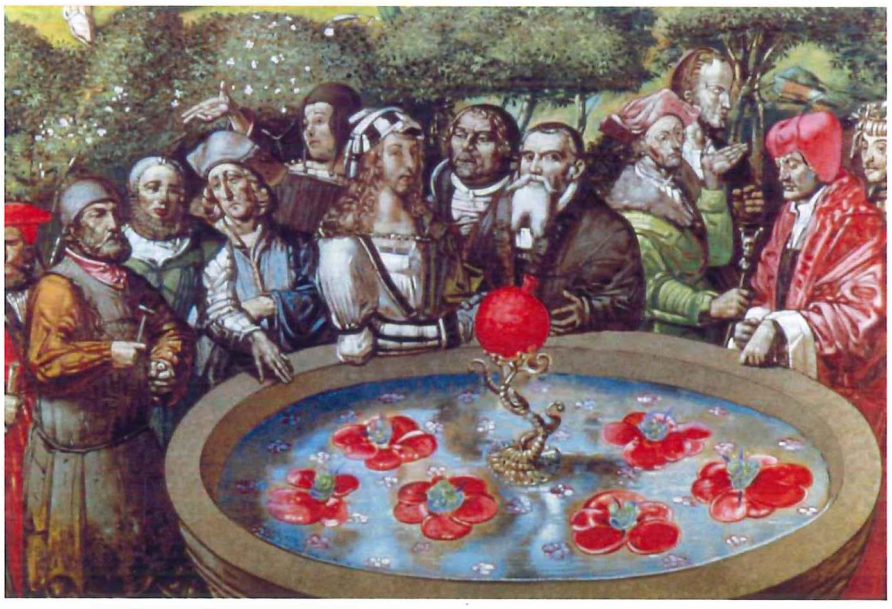


Fig. 46 Detail / Structural formation (1)
– Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany

Fig. 47 Detail / Structural formation (2)
– *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*

The art theoretician Eduard Beaucamp describes it this way:

> The 14 x 123 m large circular painting without beginning or end transcended the historical reality of the peasant war into the timelessness of the apocalyptic creation of the world or of its demise. Beyond the GDR-specific life experiences of the artist, the work became the mirror of a time of transition, disappointed by utopias.[9]

Another example is provided by the Panorama director, Gerd Linde:

> Werner Tübke begins with the Fall and draws a compositional line in a counter clockwise direction through two thirds of the painting right into the battle and over to the scenes of punishment. Thus his depiction of the battle is embedded in this religious contest of original sin and divine justice. The

[9] On line at:
http://www.faz.net/s/Rub117C535CDF414415BB243B181B8B60AE/Doc~E820611E333D84231B17D27DDC5EC8E11~ATpl~Ecommon~Scontent.html retrieved 12/02/09.

> struggle is viewed as an eschatological battle, the battle between good and evil. The figure of Thomas Müntzer, who stands in the centre of this battle, is also viewed from that aspect and in that context. He is not depicted as the revolutionary leader of the peasants, but as a theologian, a man of religion who sees his mission as the separation of the godless from the elect and is doomed to failure[10].

Writing in the Getty Research Journal, No. 3 (2011), pp 99-116, Eckhart Gillen links the circularity of the panorama to history as a cycle, suggesting that Tübke was more ". . . passionately drawn to the Day of Judgment that immediately follows it (the battle scene)" (Gillen, p 107).

These commentaries overlook Tübke's historical use of religious motives to convey political themes. Writing in *Werner Tübke and the Frankenhausen Panorama Painting* as part of the John Hopkins University American Institute for Contemporary German Studies programme, Richard W. Pettit correctly observes that:

> One of Tübke's earliest works, the unfinished oil painting "*Weißer Terror in Ungarn*" (White Terror in Hungary, 1956/57) shows clearly his use of religious motifs, and Christian iconography—here the Descent from the Cross—to convey political themes. This merging of the religious with the political is a very basic and essential characteristic of his approach to art and can be found in many of his works, including the Panorama Painting in Frankenhausen. Another later, better-known example of this aspect of Tübke's work is the large oil painting *Gruppenbild* (Group Portrait, 1972), which features a team of construction workers in hard-hats grouped around one central figure. At first glance it appears to be a very typical, almost stereotypical example of socialist realism, yet on closer inspection one senses religious overtones and recognizes unmistakably a reference to classical Renaissance renderings of Jesus and the Apostles, a reference, incidentally that even the officially sanctioned *Kunst der DDR* found worthy of noting (Pettit, p.58).

The reductive structuralism of the arguments deployed by Linde, Beaucamp, and Gillen as Derrida has warned, runs the risk of giving deficient attention to *force*—the *creativity* of that under analysis: '*Form* fascinates when one no longer has the force to understand force from within itself; that is, to create', and also necessarily neutralizes content, or the 'living energy of meaning' (Derrida, 1976: p. 5). Practices of excessive schemetization Derrida identifies as ultra structuralism — the attribution of essence to the structure as an internally unified assemblage— a formal structure in which the signs and symbols are

[10] On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the_contract.html retrieved 04/02/09.

premised on a binarism and are credited with an internal inherent meaning. These currents of thought are clearly evident in these evaluations that attribute universal meaning to the form with expressions such as—'the fall of man, divine judgement, good and evil, his mission is doomed to failure'. This occurs principally when meaning is confused with its metaphorical model thereby attributing more interest to the figure itself, which compromises the *play* of meaning within. Furthermore, the structuralist attempt to protect the internal, inherent meaning of the work and its absolute simultaneity slots in to the conventions of meaning making characterized by *logos* and often results in a rejection of the historicity of the work, which of course is the *raison d'état* of current evaluations. This rejection not only disregards the history of the mural existing as that which is immediately perceptible prior to interpretation, but also denies the internal historicity and the existence of meaning in the present since it remains ~~fix~~ed devoid of the *play* of signification. In addition to the effect arising from suppressing the history of the mural doing so runs the risk of disguising the representations that control its meaning.

Thus the mural is now invested with the power of the mediating authority—it has been stripped of its capacity for autonomy and is used for aestheticizing the already existent political power of opposition. This oppositional power is directed against the command economy that prevailed in the defunct East German state. The selective emphasis placed on the compositional structure of the mural, the derivation of meaning from the structure, and the exploitation of its ideological complexes through the stress on elements such as Good and Evil and the recurrence of the same helps to frame the perceptual limits that form opinion. These formulations bring to mind the observations of Herman and Chomsky on the question of control in democratic societies:

> (T)hat thought control in democratic societies does not happen through totalitarian, Big Brother-style mechanisms but is the result of a filtering process empowered by economic and political power operating in a free market system - there is no design, no conspiracy. Through a complex and subtle process, certain ideas, certain ways of looking at the world, are promoted and come to find their way into our heads. This is a sort of negative thought control - we are controlled as much by what is not there, as by what is. It is not that we are prevented from choosing business-unfriendly facts and ideas; we just never encounter them and so assume that they do not exist. ... (We) are convinced that (we) are making a free choice because society functions in such a way that (we) are unaware of alternatives. Moreover (we) are unaware that (we) are unaware, so that the options confronting (us) seem to be .just how life is . . .
>
> — Andrew Marr. *The Democracy Illusion*: Noam Chomsky Interview [11]

[11] Marr, Andrew, *The Democracy Illusion*: Noam Chomsky Interview, (Z Magazine, Boston1996) On line at: http://www.lol.shareworld.com/zmag/articles/sept96marrchomsky.htm retrieved 18/06/09.

This intrusion into what is a public text constitutes a direct challenge to the control of authorship and content. It would have been subject to many private comments by innumerable readers in a continuous chain of discourse in which meaning could be assimilated or contested. However the intrusion which exploits some of the contradictions in the ideological complex of the text constitutes a specifically dialogical text in which one reading of the original text is reclaimed and incorporated into the text itself (for example the mural's representation of the uprising at Frankenhausen is evaluated as a signifier of the failure of proletarian revolution). It thereby resists the problematic bond between the 'ideal' signifier emanating from the image and the material signified by forestalling every conceivable misreading. What therefore transpires is that the artist is characterized as a free subject (who) penetrate(s) the density of things and gives it meaning who reveals 'truth'. The Panorama director, Linde expresses it this way:

> To understand the history of the commission, it is necessary to outline its major stages, even if the originality of Werner Tübke's painting lies in its clever and subtle deviation from the commission's dictates. ... Tübke brought an independence of thought and concept to the work in creating an artistic vision free of political interference. ...That the artist Werner Tübke was ultimately able to set forth entirely different premises is a testament to his will power and imagination [12]

Gillen, in his article (supra) argues that Tübke viewed history as a cycle rather than a linear progression and states that Tübke ". . . was not in a position to fulfil his contract, which was, namely, to illustrate the beginning of a sequence of historical events that ultimately led to Socialism" (Gillen, p. 110). He draws this conclusion from a quote from Tübke regarding visual art: "I don't know any art from the past, just art, the chronological distance makes no difference" (Gillen, p. 110). Gillen's arguments suggest a disregard for the characteristics of virtuosity and cryptic originality that Tübke clearly possessed, investing him rather with features of disobedience and resistance. Richard W. Pettit on the other hand argues that Tübke's

> . . . talent and will power undoubtedly had the most decisive and lasting effect on the finished product. Equally remarkable is the degree to which Tübke actually followed the original conception of the painting laid down by the Ministry of Culture, notwithstanding his own creative input and the many artistic liberties he took with the subject matter (Pettit, p 67).

[12] On line at http://www.panorama-museum.de/html/the contract.html retrieved 04/02/09.

Petitt argues that although much of his work, especially from the 1970's and 1980's, moves beyond the traditional boundaries of socialist realism, Tübke was clearly fascinated with earlier periods of art history and an apparent rejection of modernity and current artistic styles. This is borne out in statements that Tübke made regarding the relationship between past and present in his painting: "It seems important to me these days that one remain open to the notion of utopia, including a past utopia. I joke sometimes that everything remains as it never was—and yet I mean it seriously." Petitt argues that an observation such as this points to Tübke's tendency to provoke controversy no matter what the context he found himself in. Hence it comes as no surprise that Tübke provocatively misconstrues aestheticism and mannerism (features so distant from his work) when in his 1997 interview with the *Berliner Zeitung*, he was asked about his very thorough, meticulous method of working, he responded that his work is basically art for art's sake, "l'art pour l'art," and that he does it really just as an excuse to go to his studio each morning and develop his ideas. His interviewer asks if this does not sound just like bourgeois subjectivism. Tübke responds typically enigmatically and hence avoids being characterized in this way: "Of course it does. I agree with that completely, that's a very good choice of words" (Pettit, p. 76).

Capitalism, it may be argued is characterized by individual creation in private studies which is precisely the identity crafted for the artist Tübke in contemporary biographies that stress the many years he spent in private research, to have dedicated his private creativity to the painting. Of course omitted from this construction is the community of scholars, historians, artists, architects, technicians, and artisans with whom a dialectical exchange of concepts and labour combined to produce the mural. Capitalism is also characterized by trade in art objects, which now become personal possessions, and by the museum system, which is to say by a strict separation between the privately owned and the publicly owned; there is also the confused, vague connection between idealism and business. And although the mural itself is not for sale, its reproductions through postcards, slides, DVD's and its draw card as a tourist attraction contribute to its commodification as a product of aesthetic pluralism. It is quite predictable therefore that the artist Tübke should be classified within the class conditioned illusion of absolute individualism. However, to properly do so would require a precise specification of the type of artist who belongs to this classification and the societal function of art, which has not been forthcoming. And indeed it cannot be forthcoming because it was made beyond or outside the art market in the context of direct political propaganda on behalf of the East German state. It was not created within the logic of the market as a product for individual consumers to purchase, but was created for the masses who should absorb and accept its ideological message.

Evaluations of the current sort distance the content of the mural from its original frame or logonomic system that understood the peasant revolt in terms of the diagnosis advanced by Engels. And it

also has appropriated its new utopian experience of the 'new-in-the-always-same' as an original entitlement or paradigm. This 'way of looking at the world' as Chomsky put it, rests in part on a hermeneutic analysis that lets emphasis fall on a continuity of time rather than its interruptions. The interruption of time, as Walter Benjamin has pointed out is the moment in which art forces 'progress' to a standstill and exposes the utopian experience of the 'new-in-the-always-same'—a rescuing critique, by contrast, that transposes what is worth knowing from the medium of the beautiful (its truth) into the world. This is further explained in terms of his philosophy of history, where emphasis falls not on continuity of time but on its interruptions. It is arguable, for example that the silent revolution in South Africa during the 1990's which opposed a racially marked community against a dominant European culture precipitated citizens incorporating unforeseen developments in their histories and recognizing the relevance of historical processes not previously regarded as relevant. But response to 'the interruption of time' brought about by the fall of the Berlin wall has taken a different turn. Here the Western cultural markets require East German citizens to rediscover, redefine, manifest but mostly reconcile their (West) German cultural identity. And this requirement emerges in the 'filtering process' which reconciles the mural both as to form and content to classical symbolic works through dichotomies such as Good and Evil. The conservative fundamentalism of this dogma is opposed to an aesthetics that is linked to the non-affirming, non-totalizing, allegorical nature of artworks. And it is through Benjamin's investigation of the baroque tragic drama which contrasts allegory with the individual totality of the transfigurative work of art – a contrast between the unreconciled and the reconciled that opens the possibility of liberating this stupendous mural.

Allegory

> The price of a lack of mimetic naturalness is what the allegorist . . . must pay in order to force his reader into an analytic frame of mind . . . The silences in allegory mean as much as the filled-in spaces, because by bridging the silent gaps between oddly related images, we reach the understructure of thought . . .
> — (Angus Fletcher, Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode, p. 107)

Although it is possible to debate the mural's content, its implications, themes and ideas, the replication of the style of medieval Europe that has been deployed to advance these ideas has problemetized the mural's capacity to resonate in the contemporary mind. Without any fore-gained knowledge, the first impression

of the mural often elicits the surprise question: When was this painted? The baroque world which the mural embraces is a lamentable and lamenting world, god forsaken, creaturely sorrowful, meaningless, verbose – where, for Walter Benjamin the allegorical imagination is a form of melancholy redemption; a world where melancholy cohabits with death and ruination. The idea of a hereafter in the course of modern history, with its progressive centuries-long tendency to secularisation, has become more and more diffuse, so that the phenomenon of death at present is often now entirely repressed; a facade of outwardly life-affirming diversions displaces the view to that area outside one's personal experience of time where the village of old, of community and church has been displaced by the instant town and shopping mall. Böcklin's "Islands of the Dead" is a suitable comparison here: what lies hidden beyond the shores of the island, behind silence and darkness, is no longer a question of faith, but has become much more a matter of imagination, of fantasy. The essential subject-matter is invisible. Hence the contemporary mind does not relate to a style depicting an obsession with death and the allegorical and symbolical treatment of the axioms or codes underlying salvation from death such as sin, redemption and the Immaculate Conception, all of which the mural incorporates.

Fig. 48 - Arnold Böcklin–Island of the Dead

The mural's immersion in the medieval idiom inevitably connects its iconography to the allegorical realm of much of the baroque art. The 17th Century German play of mourning, the *Trauerspiel* forms the subject matter of Walter Benjamin's erudite and challenging critique, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, in which he intended to correct two misunderstandings of the *Trauerspiel* form as he saw it: that it was merely a feeble imitation of tragedy and that it's key literary device, allegory, is inferior to symbolism

(Benjamin, 1998). For Benjamin the baroque play of mourning was to be distinguished from classical tragedy because of its completely different grounding and purpose: rather than being concerned with myth and the fate of the tragic hero, the *Trauerspiel* presented the dismal events of history as they conspired to ruin the sovereign. It is not ennobling heroic action but human indecision, which leads to catastrophe and melancholy. The *Trauerspiel* articulates a mournful, utterly profane realm of creaturely compulsion and human misery. Benjamin's immanent critique of these scorned and neglected works, reinterpreted and redeemed them as the quintessential expression of the frailties and vanities of God forsaken human existence, and the natural history of the human physis as decay. In doing so, Benjamin argued for the importance of allegory as a trope which renders and represents the world precisely as fragmentation, ruination and mortification.

A melancholy human life in a world bereft of significance and grace is fundamental to the *Trauerspiel*. It's prototype is the Play of Lamentation, common in the late middle ages and referencing the Maries at the foot of the Cross and Sarah, the mother of the Jewish race weeping for her lost children. A recent form has been Gorecki's Third Symphony – the "*Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*". Notably Werner Tübke has incorporated the Lamentations of Jeremiah in the mural. The play of mourning portrays only the futile gestures and schemes of the brutal tyrant and the treacherous courtier, ignoble actions which culminate only in ruin and death. In this bleak context the bombastic language of the *Trauerspiel* takes on a particular significance as the clearest indication of the dramatists understanding of the desolation of humankind. The clumsy language of the *Trauerspiel* is overladen with and hollows out meaning; it exhausts itself in convoluted metaphors, superabundance and overdetermination of meaning. Arcane emblems, signs and hieroglyphics proliferate and accumulate for their own sake. Sorrow is translated not into meaningful speech but rather 'evocative' music. Speech is thus replaced and the meaning of language in the *Trauerspiel* paradoxically translates into the absence of meaning language is pure sound or prattle. [13]

Benjamin's investigation of the *Trauerspiel* contrasts allegory with the individual totality of the transfigurative work of art – a contrast between the unreconciled and the reconciled. He restores allegory from the denigration it has undergone at the hands of symbolism. He notes that the allegory has been

[13] (Benjamin, 1998: pp. 198-199), for example observes: "...there is a pronounced obsession with using these words (concrete words) on the one hand and, on the other, displaying elegant antithesis, that when an abstract word seems quite unavoidable, a concrete word is added to it with quite uncommon frequency, so that new words are invented. For instance: 'the lightening of calumny, the poison of Vainglory, the cedars of innocence, the blood of friendship.' And 'Because Mariamne too bites like a viper and loves the gall of discord more than the sugar of peace.' And 'Lechery cannot occupy the place of virtue...Ironwort blossoms beside noble roses'. And 'the comets are copulating in the castle of Salem'. And 'Theodoric too has embarked on that sea where the fragile boat is surrounded by ice instead of waves, secret poison instead of salt, sword and axe instead of oars, spiders webs instead of sails, perfidious lead instead of an anchor'.

drained of immanent meaning – a pure 'facticity' under the manipulative hand of the allegorist, awaiting such meaning as he or she may imbue it with. However the process of signification in allegory is not a mere mode. Signifieds metonymically displace themselves onto their signifiers, so that jealousy becomes as sharp and as functional as the dagger with which it is associated. This process of signification may be subject to proliferation, where meaning is irreducibly multiple, in which "any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else" (Benjamin, 1998: p. 175). Eagleton notes that for Benjamin the profoundly dialectic nature of allegory lies in its liberation into polyvalence: "Allegorical discourse has the doubleness of the death's-head totally expressionless – the black of the eye sockets – coupled to the most unbridled expression – the grinning rows of teeth" (Eagleton, 1881: p. 20). In allegory, then the meaning of an object is torn apart, subject to a process of mortification. The corpse is emblematic (Benjamin, 1998: p. 218). In allegory the corpse of the creature is dissected by the dramatist so that the fragments of the *physis* can be imbued with meanings and associations Benjamin notes: "Martyrdom thus prepares the body of the living person for emblematic purposes (Benjamin 1998: p. 178). The allegorical mutilation of the corpse is not for purposes of salvation but in order to disclose in the ruined body the truth and hopelessness of the creaturely condition. Benjamin writes: "It is not for the sake of immortality that they (characters of the *Trauerspiel*) meet their end, but for the sake of the corpse" (Benjamin 1998: pp. 217-218). Allegory then draws a line between signifier and signified, the ultimate disjoining of consciousness and physical nature, which is death. Hence allegory, in its search to unpick the fragments, is a mode concerned with the ruination of (beautiful) appearance and the illusion of totality which characterize the work of art and in particular the symbol for the sake of the meaning of an object which " ebbs out, scattered to the manifold regions of meaning" (Benjamin, 1998: p. 217).

The purpose of Benjamin's discourse on allegory is thus a concern with the 'recreation of criticism' leading to the foregrounding of immanent criticism as an unfolding of the text, as the continual (re)constitution of its meaning in the afterlife. This concept of criticism also prefigures some important poststructuralist and postmodern principles. It seeks neither to rediscover some privileged authorial purpose nor to impose the canonical aesthetic judgements of self appointed expert arbiters of 'taste'. Rather it recognizes that the meaning of a text is determined by the critical constellation it enters into with the present. This involves both a decentring of the author and a privileging of reading and interpretation, understood as historically specific situated practices. Textual meaning is never fixed and finalized but always contingent, open to endless interpretations, infinitely subject to Derridian deferral. As the notion of allegory suggests, textual meanings are manifold and multiple, characterized by a radical ambiguity and indeterminacy.

This criticism opens up the possibility of challenging and disturbing the dominant, established meanings attributed to artworks, literary texts and all other cultural products. Culture is not a sphere of eternal values, but is a domain of contested meanings. This contestation is not to be understood as an arcane aesthetic debate but rather as a vital part of contemporary political struggles.

For Benjamin, the melancholy human condition and the misery of over named nature are the basis of the pitiful lamentation expressed in the language of the *Trauerspiel.* Melancholy is to be understood conceptually not as 'the emotional condition of the poet or his public' (Benjamin, 1998: p. 139), but rather as a historical sensibility, or cultural condition, a 'particular way of seeing', or *Weltanschauung.* As such melancholy involved a complex of attributes, associations and astrological connections which fascinated the baroque.

In their emphasis upon allegory, the linguistic trope wherein one image or object comes to stand for another or for a plethora of others, the authors of the *Trauerspiel* fore grounded the arbitrary character of the linguistic sign and its imposition upon a sad, mute nature. He writes that post Fall, the source of the sadness of nature is the fallen human language. Without reference to the Word, silent nature is subject to the prattle of human language; the plethora of languages results in a multitude of names. However, the conventional character of allegory and its ceaseless hollowing out of meaning are not signs of aesthetic failure. Allegory is dialectical and reversible. In the dialectical play of allegory, the profane world is cast down only for it to be raised up once more. In the *Trauerspiel,* allegory's concern with expressing the God forsaken world tumbles from one image to another in its descent into meaninglessness, yet allegory is not itself immanent. It is a 'mode of ruination for the sake of truth' as Benjamin observes: "As those who lose their footing turn somersaults in their fall. So would the allegorical intention fall from emblem to emblem down in to the dizziness of its bottomless depths, were it not that, even in the most extreme of them, it had so to turn about all its darkness, vainglory and godlessness seem to be nothing but self delusion" (Benjamin, 1998: p. 232). Hence just as the fish is at once both a religious symbol and a symbol of decaying ideology, so allegories of decay and ruination reverse direction and transform themselves into those of salvation and redemption. Benjamin writes:

> Allegory goes away empty handed. Evil, as such, which it cherished as enduring profundity, exists only in allegory, is nothing other than allegory, and means something different from what it is. It means precisely the non-existence of what it presents. The absolute vices, as exemplified by tyrants and intriguers are allegories. They are not real.
>
> — Benjamin, 1998: p. 233

Thus the mortified flesh of the corpse becomes the 'allegory of resurrection'. For Benjamin, symbol, however resides in the unity and immediacy with which it expresses an idea – it is not dispersed across a plethora of disparate referents but is concentrated intensely on a single image as a 'momentary totality'. Full, complete, self contained, the symbol encapsulates '... clarity...brevity...grace...and beauty' (Benjamin, 1998: p. 164). Its success relies not upon the recognition of conventional associations, but upon its inspired originality. "It is like the sudden appearance of a ghost, or a flash of lightening that illuminates the dark' (Benjamin, 1998: p. 163). Whereas the symbol presents the eternal in the lightening flash of the mystical instant, allegory portrays the transient and ephemeral in the duration of sorrowful contemplation. It presents life subject to time, natural history as decay and ruination. The baroque renounces eschatology, writes Benjamin. "The hereafter is emptied of everything which contains the slightest breath of this world . . . in order to clear an ultimate heaven, enabling it, as a vacuum, one day to destroy the world with catastrophic violence (Benjamin, 1998: p. 66). In the absence of eschatology, the allegorical gaze is fixed upon the form in which man's subjection to nature is most obvious, that is "creaturely death". Benjamin writes:

> In allegory, the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocritica* of history, as a petrified, primordial landscape. Everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face–or rather a death's head . . . This is the heart of the allegorical way of seeing, of the baroque, secular explanation of history as the Passion of the world; its importance resides solely in the stations of its decline.
> — Benjamin, 1998: p. 166

Gilloch notes that whereas Greek tragedy presents the intercourse of mortals, gods and fantastical beings, locating them outside ordinary historical life, the *Trauerspiel* "expressed ruinous historical events principally in the central figure of the absolute sovereign" (Gilloch, 2002: p. 75). In a broad sense we may describe the mural *Early Bourgeois revolution in Germany* in these terms, where it centres on Thomas Müntzer as the principle protagonist. If we then apply Benjamin's notion of allegory to Thomas Müntzer we see that he is neither the (symbol) figurehead of a revolutionary heritage nor the tragic hero of the failed communist revolution; that is, he is neither the primary source of signification, nor a symbol of immanence, but he is a caricature of individualism, the dismal events of history having conspired to ruin him. His ruin is thus neither heroic nor tragic. Rather, the historical forces of the Reformation hold him in their grasp. And that revolutionary heritage is not depicted as a tragedy occurring outside ordinary historical life.

The instability arising in the multitude of motifs, the fractured indexing of signs and the repositioning of 16th Century imagery grounds the mural upon the dialectical play of allegory in the sense understood by Benjamin. This opens the possibility that the mural as a whole stands for something else thereby ensuring its liberation from traditional interpretations and context. That something else necessarily includes its compelling conceptual references that affirm the belief in the possibility of progress in contemporary discourse, those undercurrents within the epoch that intervene in the hegemony of the Federal Republic and the material nature of that intervention, as its primary possibility. By showing the absolute futility of raw historicism this may provide for its relocation and reconfiguration as part of a wider pattern in the reunified Federal Republic, and the basis for a significant *meta-epistemic,* (Foucault) that articulates the limits of the discourse of a German belief in political and historical progress through the German people's first radical attempt to transform society. In this manner history is redeemed, not by being recuperated in spirit or essence, but rather fashioned into certain enigmatic emblems which then hold the promise of knowledge and possession.

Notes

[i] The exterior wings have a clear position within the sequential narrative of the work as a whole. They show an unpopulated earth comprised solely of rock and plant, contrasting sharply with the inner central panel which contains a paradise teeming with lustful humanity. As with Bosch's Haywain triptych, the inner centerpiece is flanked by heavenly and hellish imagery. The scenes depicted in the triptych are thought to follow a chronological order, flowing from left-to-right they represent respectively, Eden, the garden of earthly delights, and Hell. God appears as the creator of humanity in the left hand wing, However, in contrast to Bosch's two other "true" triptychs, The Last Judgement (after 1482) and The Haywain (completed in 1490), God is absent from the central panel. Instead, this panel shows humanity acting with free will and engaging in various sexual activities. The right hand panel is believed to show God wreaking vengeance for these sins in a Last Judgement hellscape. The left panel depicts a scene from the paradise of the Garden of Eden commonly interpreted as the moment when God presents Eve to Adam. The painting shows Adam waking from a deep sleep to find God holding Eve by her wrist and giving the sign of his blessing to their union. God is shown as younger-looking than on the outer panels, blue-eyed and with golden curls. His youthful appearance may be a device by the artist to illustrate the concept of Christ as the incarnation of the Word of God. The skyline of the centre panel (220 × 195 cm, 87 x 77 in) matches exactly with that of the left wing, while the positioning of its two central pools echoes the lake in the earlier panel. The centre image depicts the expansive "garden" landscape which gives the triptych its name. The panel shares a common horizon with the left wing, suggesting a temporal and spatial connection between the two scenes. The garden is teeming with male and female nudes, together with a variety of animals, plants and fruit. The setting is not the paradise shown in the left panel, but neither is it based in the terrestrial realm. Fantastic creatures mingle with the real; otherwise ordinary fruits appear engorged to a gigantic size. The figures are engaged in diverse amorous sports and activities, both in couples and in groups. The numerous human figures revel in an innocent, self-absorbed joy as they engage in a wide range of activities: some enjoy sexual pleasures, others play unselfconsciously in the water, and yet others cavort in meadows with a variety of animals, seemingly at one with nature. In the middle of the background, a large blue globe resembling a fruit pod rises in the middle of a pond. Visible through its circular window is a man fondling his partner's genitals, and the bare buttocks of yet another figure hover in the vicinity. The right panel (220 × 97.5 cm, 87 x 38.4 in) illustrates Hell, the setting of a number of Bosch paintings. Bosch depicts a world in which humans have succumbed to the temptations of the devil and reap eternal damnation. The tone of this final panel strikes a harsh contrast to those preceding it. The scene is set at night, and the natural beauty that adorned the earlier panels is noticeably absent. Compared to the warmth of the centre panel, the right wing possesses a chilling quality—rendered through cold colourisation and frozen waterways—and presents a tableau that has shifted from the paradise of the center image to a spectacle of cruel torture and retribution. In a single, densely detailed scene, the viewer is made witness to cities on fire in the background; war, torture chambers, infernal taverns, and demons in the mid-ground; and mutated animals feeding on human flesh in the foreground. The nakedness of the human figures has lost all its eroticism, and many now attempt to cover their genitalia and breasts with their hands.

[ii] Ichthus (Greek: ἰχθύς, capitalized ΙΧΘΥΣ or ΙΧΘΥC) is the ancient and classical Greek word for "fish". In English it refers to a symbol consisting of two intersecting arcs, the ends of the right side extending beyond the meeting point so as to resemble the profile of a fish, said to have been used by early Christians as a secret symbol and now known colloquially as the "sign of the fish" or the "Jesus fish". *Ichthus* can be read as an acrostic. It compiles to "Jesus Christ, God's son, savior". Fish are mentioned and given symbolic meaning several times in the Gospels. Several of Jesus' twelve disciples were fishermen. He commissions them with the words "I will make you fishers of men."At the feeding of five thousand, a boy is brought to Jesus with "five small loaves and two fish". The question is asked, "But what are they, among so many?" Jesus multiplies the loaves and fish to feed the multitude. In Matthew 13:47-50 Jesus compares God's decision on who will go to heaven or to hell ("the fiery furnace") at the end of this world to fishers sorting out their catch, keeping the good fish and throwing the bad fish away. In John 21:11 it is related that the disciples fished all night but caught nothing. Jesus instructed them to cast the nets on the other side of the boat, and they drew in 153 fish. A less commonly cited use of fish in Christ's life may be found in the words of Matthew 17: 24-27. The Greek acrostic is occasionally incorporated in the body of the fish. In recent times it has been satirized with two little feet and the word "Darwin' written into its body.

CHAPTER THREE

The First Murals – King Billy

Collective Identity and meta-narrative

Politico-Historico context

The Militarized Mural

Republican Murals

— The hunger strike; the emergence of Republican murals; the autonomy of the hunger strike murals.

The Blanket Protest

— The effects of violence on the performativity of legislation and legislation's mediation on the performative capacities of paramilitaries.

The Murals

— Their power is exercised through the structures designed to eliminate them; constitutional politics.

Charting the Miriam Daly Mural

— Its contingency, its contestation, its possibility of becoming real.

The First Murals – King Billy

We're on the one road
It may be the wrong road
But we're together now, who cares.
— Republican ballad.

Mural painting in Northern Ireland has two oppositional foundations although both are specific to working class housing estates. The fracture in class to which these murals give witness has multifaceted origins, not least of which arises from viewing the world through the prism of nationalism rather than class. On one side republican murals emerged during the 1980's in response to a specific political event, namely the Hunger Strike of 1981. These murals are generally associated with the political insurgency against British imperialism in Northern Ireland that took place during the Troubles. On the other hand unionism with Britain has a long tradition of mural painting going back to the early twentieth century. The first of these unionist murals was painted in 1908 in Belfast in Beersbridge Road by John Mclean who was a shipyard worker. The subject of the mural was King William III of Orange victoriously crossing the river Boyne on his white horse in 1690. The standard contemporary heroic image of King William III (King Billy as he came to be known) reveals an affinity with a fine art tradition which ultimately depends upon a complex tradition of Williamite imagery developed between the Dutch monarch's campaign in Ireland in the 1690's and the early years of the 20th Century. Various depictions of William III have played a significant part in this developing tradition. Dutch medals celebrating the King's Irish victories, portraits of him by artists like Kneller and Wyck and the statue of him by Grinling Gibbons which stood in Dublin from 1701 to its destruction by the Irish Republican Army in 1929 have all been influential. In his examination of murals and conflict in Northern Ireland, *Politics and Painting*, Bill Rolston cites Belinda Loftus' research of the King Billy iconography (Rolston, 1991. pp. 16-23). Rolston notes that Loftus has demonstrated that the historical hero image of William was not the first to appear: "In the representations of William produced during his lifetime, he was shown in two main roles ... Either he was a timeless, classical emperor, or a historical heroic leader, often mounted on horseback and leading his troops into battle. The first was a long-standing cliché, which went back to the Roman emperors...the second was relatively new, probably developed by the Dutch' (Loftus 1977, p. 8, cited in

Rolston, 1991: pp. 16-17). Loftus' research shows that although the classical representation of William predominated at first (the Grinling Gibbons statue for example), the image upon which the majority of King Billy murals depend is Benjamin West's painting of the battle of the Boyne, first exhibited in 1780. Loftus notes that there is no evidence that the original was ever in Ireland, but the engraving made of it in 1781 was imported and became popular among Irish loyalists. It was used as the basis for the frontispiece to a collection of constitutional songs published in Ireland in 1798; by the 1820's a lithograph version can be found in a songbook produced for the Apprentice Boys; [1] and during the same period the painting was reproduced on an elegant silk handkerchief, which was proudly framed and displayed in the house of at least one Planter family in Ulster. The closeness of this image to early King Billy murals was very marked, although as Loftus notes there have been "King Billy's as elegant as 18th century portraits or as vulgar as pop art for the reason that the painters ranged from those with some painting experience to those who painted more from pleasure or political commitment than skill" (Loftus 1980a: p. 4 cited in Rolston, 1991: p. 23).

Until 1994 the oldest extant mural of unionism's most famous image, found in Derry was the King Billy painted by Bobby Jackson in about 1926. This mural was touched up and maintained for the following 70 years by three generations of the Jackson family (Rolston 1995: p. ii) and was to be found in the protestant working class enclave on the city side of Derry's River Foyle, known as the Fountain Area.[2] This mural, a diptych was painted with considerable skill. The mural showed a 'remarkable likeness' (Loftus, ibid) to Benjamin West's painting. Shown was King Billy in red coat and long boots astride a white stallion. With sword pointed forward and infantry assembled behind he leads his horse across the river Boyne. On the adjoining panel a crowd of grateful citizens welcomes the lifting of the siege of Derry by Williamite forces. The imagery was colourful, and displayed formal knowledge of perspective, anatomy and a capacity for narrative.

[1] The Prentice Boys is a protestant fraternal society based in Derry.
[2] During the 1970's the mural was removed to make way for redevelopment of the area. Although reassembled, it broke apart in 1994.

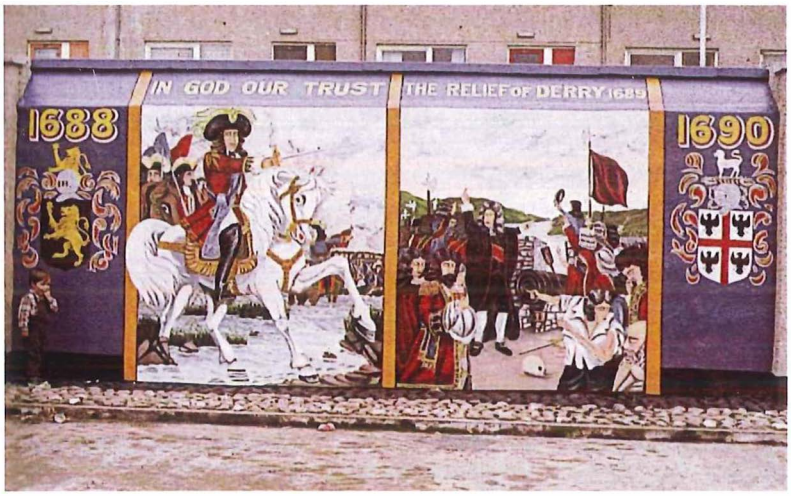


Fig. 49 Bobby Jackson's King Billy (1)

The predisposition of the murals of unionism to a fine art tradition of formal structure in which the signs and symbols are credited with an internal, universal idealism runs alongside the investment of power in the sense of Michel Foucault's analysis of the mechanisms of power that is activated in these images through a history (that is, emerges from a diachronic linearity) of relations of power that were constructed and engaged with in the colonial expansion of the British state, which from as early as the 16th Century affected Ireland. The centuries old battle that the King crossing the Boyne references occurred in 1690. Rolston suggests that "*Remember 1690"* is perhaps the most emotive slogan of unionism (Rolston, 1991: p. 15). In that year the forces of the protestant Dutch King William III defeated catholic King James at the river Boyne in Ireland. His victory is said to have halted the catholic attempt to re-establish royal power in England and to have guaranteed protestant liberty rather than catholic authoritarianism in both England and Ireland. The symbolic impact of these events transferred to the imagery of the Beersbridge Road 1908 King Billy mural and provided a strategy for the production of a highly motivated image in the sense understood by Umberto Eco who argues that at a certain point an iconic representation appears to hold greater 'truth' than the real experience—thereby people begin to "look at things through the glasses of iconic convention" (Eco, 1976: pp. 204-5). It is arguable therefore that the King Billy iconography has formed the backbone of the power relations invested by unionism in its visual culture.

These power relations are concerned with unionism's sentimental notion of nationalism. Unlike market socialism or proportional representation, nationalism is a feeling before it is a theory – the untranslateable spirit of the nation, a distilled essence of national yearning. The Bobby Jackson mural for example which was a familiar landmark forming part of the everyday fabric of life regardless of whether or not local people approved of it, was located in a run down, dreary, impoverished and damp district of

uncompromising urban decay. But this was not simply a whimsical decoration brightening up an oppressive locale. Rather it railed against the dehumanizing surroundings; yet the challenge of the primacy of nationalism to that of class it offered was to the inhabitants of the community rather than to the guardians of industrial capitalism or the managers of urban decay. Thus, within its 'formalized' aestheticism the triumphant nationalism metonymically attached to King Billy provided a sanctuary for safe and easy evasion of the underlying elements of poverty and class differentiation.

Fig. 50 Bobby Jackson's King Billy (2)

Alongside and in support of the iconography of King Billy which dominated these early murals appeared related murals with a limited range of themes but all serving the vision of a community sprung from heroism and battle. Murals embracing more recent events and victories carried the descendants of that victory into the modern era. One mural showed the Ulster division going over the top at the Battle of the Somme with the Angel of Mons hovering over the mountain. World War I, and particularly the fate of the Ulster Division at the battle of the Somme, did much to strengthen unionist identity and hence the unionist alliance. The 36th Ulster Division webpage carries a report on the battle that reveals the extent to which the mythologized narrative of the Battle of the Boyne frames unionism's identity to the present:

> By a quirk of fate (the weather was foul) the attack which had been planned for the 29 June 1916 had been postponed to the 1st July 1916. In the old calendar, this was the Ulstermen's anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. Here was a chance for the men from County Fermanagh serving in the battalions of the Inniskillings to repeat the deeds of their ancestors who had played a pivotal part in the victory on the banks of another river. Hymns were sung and in some cases Orange

Sashes worn'. The casualties that day in the Ulster Division amounted to 216 Officers and 5266 Men. [3]

More examples showed Lord Roberts flanked by two British soldiers from the Anglo-Boer war; the visit of the prince of Wales to Northern Ireland was depicted with him playing the great Lambeg drum, favourite instrument of the Orangemen; King George V and Queen Mary were depicted at their coronation, and victory was celebrated in 1945 with rising sun and aeroplanes flying past.

From its first appearance the King Billy signifier was highly politicized. Its particularity emerged at a pivotal moment affecting the constitutional framework and government of Ireland during the later part of the 19th century and first two decades of the 20th century. At that time British imperial rule in Ireland had become increasingly contentious. The British parliament introduced a draft Home Rule Bill for all Ireland whereby its constituent powers of governance would be assured subject to British executive authority an effect which would open up the contest for political representation in all Ireland to all its citizenry. At that time unionism represented a minority protestant community located mostly in the north. It opposed the proposed constitutional change and threatened force against Britain if the proposal went ahead. Oddly unionism's political ideology on one level is committed to the maintenance and strengthening of the relationship between Ireland and Great Britain, especially in the sense of *Britishness*, while on the other it is liberated of that sentiment strategically in order to retain its majority in Northern Ireland. The subsequent partition of Ireland in 1922 was structured on a demographic of Northern Ireland's six Ulster counties which was perceived to be large enough and sufficiently weighted in favour of a protestant unionist majority to constitute a conformist and economically viable state as opposed to a province. Hence partition brought about a division of Ireland suited in the north to the political ambitions of an alliance formed between unionism and British imperialism. With its majority in place a constitutional system of Home Rule for Northern Ireland now became acceptable to unionism which thereby had a developed government, established recognized and underwritten by the British parliament. Ironically therefore, the triumphalism of the King Billy mural simultaneously aligns with and withdraws from British imperialism amalgamating in the process a confused collective identity, which is at once both British but Not-British and Irish but Not-Irish.

This confusion is a congealed mix of myth and geography. While the fountainhead of the unionist myth springs in the crown of England, the unionist must stand ground on the island of Ireland. The urge to fundamentalism that this mix has produced inevitably shows itself in these early murals. Reminiscent of medieval murals, they visualize conservatism and the maintenance of the status quo rather than

[3] On line at www.webmatters.net/france/ww1_ulster2.htm retrieved 10/08/2010.

liberation, anti-imperialism and socialism – a notion most commonly associated with the political mural. Simultaneously aestheticising a homogeneous political vision of an identity categorized in British hegemony, they deployed their metaphor of domination to actively marginalize the minority secularized catholic population. This imbalance was irrefutably grounded in the power relations that promoted unionism's political governance. Unlike the political programme of the German Democratic Republic of materializing the sign of collective identity in the mural entitled *Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany*, unionism's identity could not rely solely on an affirmation of what unionism *was*; rather it gained its hierarchical supremacy from an anthropological otherness – of what it deemed it *was not* – that is the non-British 'Other'. This anomaly arose through a constructed historiography by means of which the protagonists sought to annex the past imperial conquest to themselves as an original entitlement or paradigm - an attempt to recognize the past "the way it really was", and to protect the past into the present. In his analysis of the ideological and organizational development that marked provisional republicanism in the period after 1985, Kevin Bean (2007) argues persuasively that for republicans, unionism faces a fundamental crisis inherent in its historical development and contradictory position within both the United Kingdom and Ireland. Drawing from both British and Irish sources, unionism is a hybrid identity that is uncertain of its agency and place in the world – "a failure to construct an identity that was rooted in the actual cultural fabric of the people, or invent a tradition that means real things to real people in real moments of history", and hence were (are) "victims of a history made behind their backs'" (Bean, 2007: p. 246). As a result it is arguable that no attempt has been made to deliver the tradition in a new mode from this conformism, identified in Walter Benjamin's productive critique: "In every epoch, the attempt must be made to deliver tradition anew from the conformism which is on the point of overwhelming it. The same threat hangs over both the content and the receivers: that of becoming a tool of the ruling class" (Benjamin, 2003: *On the Concept of History*).

When postcolonial theorist, Homi Bhabha, deployed Foucault's analytics of power to explore the 'psychic sphere of colonial relations' evident in the often unstable nature of British colonial administration in India (Bhabha 1994), he might have been writing precisely of the colonial administration in Northern Ireland. Bhabha challenged the binary oppositions embedded in Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, and unlike Said's analysis of British and French imperialism in the Near East, which focused entirely on the power of the colonizer he claimed that like all power holders, colonial authorities unconsciously incited 'refusal, blockage, and invalidation' in their attempts at constant surveillance in India (Bhabha 1994: p. 11). Bhabha refined his theory of active subaltern resistance with three interconnected concepts: mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity.

Mimicry is: 'the [colonizer's] desire for a reformed, recognizable 'Other', as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite' (Bhabha 1994: p. 86). British desire for the 'Other' to mimic 'Britishness' while also maintaining segregation, created the primary site of subaltern agency in India (Bhabha 1994: p. 86). Similar manifestations are apparent in Northern Ireland. Thus British colonialists have presented the colonized with insights into Britishness, which they could use to strengthen their position with the colonizer. Bhabha referred to this problematic as the 'ironic compromise' or the conscious ability of the colonized to return or choose not to return the colonizer's 'gaze' (Bhabha 1994: pp. 85, 112).

Bhabha used ambivalence to explore an informed identity struggle between both parties based on 'conflictual feelings and attitudes' (Bhabha 1994: p. 67). This ambivalent axis of aversion and desire which is at once a recognition of difference and disavowal of it has a fundamental significance for colonial discourse – a significance which is precisely the subject's primal fantasy for a pure origin that is always threatened by its division. It is thus mimicry which is the desire for a reformed, recognizable 'Other' as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite which emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. This means that the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority.

It is precisely this recognition which affects the relationship between unionism and the British and which Bean has identified as the republican perception of unionism It is no surprise that the Northern Ireland poet Michael Langley should encapsulate the dilemma with the refrain: At times I feel Irish// At times I feel English// At times I feel neither. But Bhabha's third concept, hybridity, refers to moments when the colonized recognizes the relational nature of the colonizer's identity. This knowledge empowers the colonized subject to reject misrepresentation of their own identity; it is precisely this recognition that powers the republican movement. The consequence for Northern Ireland has been that faced with these partly acculturated colonized subjects, who occupy a number of subject positions in-between the British and the still traditional indigenous population, the British neither establish themselves as a unified culture in the colonial setting, nor have absolute authority over these colonized subjects. Instead, both parties lived interconnected lives, where transactions in British Northern Ireland do not completely originate in Britain. The resulting conflict of identity between unionism and republicanism that the imperial administration of Northern Ireland has thus brought about finds unionism and its armed wing loyalism as proxy for the colonizer oppressing the marginalized minority. And the role played by the King Billy mural iconography deployed in the form of architectural artifacts asserts what Homi Bhabha might have referred to as "architecture of colonial governance". Thus Jarman states:

> Mural painting has been a feature of unionist popular culture since the early years of this century when images of King William III and other Orange symbols began to adorn the gable walls of the working-class areas of Belfast. They appeared as part of an assertion of the Protestant people's sense of British identity during an extended period of political crisis.
> (Jarman, 1998)[4]

The challenge of surmounting the motif of eternal return, articulated through Nietzsche and Benjamin—involving a disturbing, infinite sense of the habitual and inevitable return to the past, that this uncomfortable mix continually unearths as an ugly spectre that undercuts narratives of completion, particularly those of progress and triumph has been met by investing the King Billy icon with a super power. He is the Protestant Supreme – a sort of Nietzscherian Superman *Übermensch*. This may be read as an unstable analogy, given Nietzscher's concept of the ultra aristocratic Machiavellian Übermensch who personifies the contrast to the other-worldliness of Christianity while unionism's pages are absorbed with the ink of Protestantism. But just as Übermensch embodies what Rudiger Safranski describes as a combination of ruthless warrior pride and artistic brilliance (Safranski, 2002: p. 36) so does King Billy. For Übermensch read *King William*, for nihilism read *King James* and for new values read '*Britishness' supplanting heathen Irishness in Ireland.* As Safranski suggests the Übermensch acts to create new values within the moral vacuum of nihilism, and consequently there is nothing that this creative act would not justify. Here read *marginalization* of the catholic other (associated with Irishness, hence heathen), economic deprivation and violence.

The metonymical coding of King Billy stands comparison with a mural which could be found briefly in 1993 on a nearby wall to the Bobby Jackson mural in the Fountain area of Derry. The writing: You've heard of King William III...Now meet King Michael Stone— appeared above a white horse painted in the traditional style of King Billy's horse, carrying Michael Stone pointing a handgun. A gravestone was shown on the green turf. This mural referenced the loyalist paramilitary Michael Stone who had attacked a republican funeral in Belfast in 1988 with grenades and a handgun during which he killed three mourners at the funeral of Sean Savage, Mairead Farrell and Dan McCann who were the victims of a state sanctioned killing by the British Special Arms Squad in Gibralter during 1988.

[4] The article is available on line at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/bibdbs/murals/jarman.htm#chap5 retrieved 5/04/10.

Fig. 51 Mural – Michael Stone

A later mural (since painted out) accorded him with heroism. It showed his portrait with crests of the Ulster Freedom Fighters (of which he became the leader), East Belfast UDA and LPA and the writing: 'Michael Stone. His only crime was loyalty. *Quis separabit*. The cold grey mists shall never set on Ulster's fields, the victor's cup shall not be raised unless we yield, our fighting men shall not retreat or bend the knee, until the day imprisoned souls are all set free'.

Whereas the abstracted symbolism of King Billy concealed the king's body behind the metaphorizing attributed to the historicized events of 1690, the Michael Stone mural made the medium of the hero's body the message, and made the message a political one. The heroes of antiquity had such bodies when they were seized by an unbridled passion and were ready to destroy and be destroyed. In a certain sense the heroic war action of the past was futile and irrelevant without artistic intervention - the painter who inscribed the heroic action into the memory of the community. However the loyalist paramilitary did not need artistic intervention to inscribe his feats into memory. He was the artist. In like manner this mural takes side not with conviction, theory and programme but with bodies – those of fighters and soldiers ready to kill. And its subversive aesthetics are used to attack and undermine the different 'other' culture of republicanism, in an act of violence and humiliation. Rather than self questioning it leaves the conservative values of the perpetrators own culture completely unquestioned.

In the imagery that loyalism produced in the years following the 1960's civil rights campaign, the hero that was King Billy disappeared behind the balaclava and armelite of the emerging loyalist fighter. Balaclava covered paramilitaries, acts of overt terror painted into the loyalist murals engaged with the dimensions of violence not by offering an 'understanding' of or insight into the situation but by revealing political consequences; that is their reflex to the situation was *ex negativo* adopting a critical position merely for the sake of being critical. Hence these murals incorporated militaristic symbols intentionally

threatening, anti-nationalist/republican and anti catholic. None of their primary indicators refer to an affirmative, emancipatory vision. Rather they installed the dimensions of violence and terror that otherwise circulated in the community. The new loyalist painters were young men with militant politics, no longer the artisans of previous decades. The murals which were painted contemporaneously with the surge in loyalist paramilitary violence in the late 1980's displayed paramilitary fighters, primarily the UFF (Ulster Freedom Fighters), the UVF (Ulster Volunteer Force) and the RHC (Red Hand Commando); their deployed signifiers such as Balaclavas and automatic weapons were conjoined with threatening writing. Sometimes the weapons stood alone alongside the acronym of a loyalist paramilitary group. Hence in Ohio Street, Belfast two armed loyalist paramilitaries of the 1st Battalion, B Company, with flags and emblems of Ulster Volunteers and Young Citizens Volunteers, were set alongside the writing: The UVF reserve the right to strike at republican targets where and when the opportunity arises; in Crumlin Road, Belfast armed loyalists in action armalite rifles aimed, were depicted alongside a crest with Crown, Union jack and St Andrews Scotland's flag, and emblems of the UFF, UDA, the Loyalist Prisoners Association and the UDF. The murals most often contained a simple message: Who will defend Ulster; we will maintain our faith and our nationality; The Ulster conflict is about Nationality; there is no such thing as a nationalist area of Ulster only areas temporarily occupied by nationalists. The mere presence of the paradigmatic military mural thus sufficed to convey a strong message in the context of ongoing civilian killings. In these murals thus violence is not occluded but terror is strategized through signifiers of anonymity and threat, masked and unidentifiable; thus involves a dangerous performativity; dangerous precisely because they admit an unstable series of possibilities. By the early 1990's loyalists were killing more people than were killed by republicans.

The visual militarism of loyalism was matched by republicanism whose militaristic visuality emerged in response to the 1981 Hunger strike. Taken together, that is the loyalist murals on one hand and the republican murals on the other, a hierarchy of meaning is avoided merely by one side countering and contesting the power of the other. This contestation was not an entrenched dichotomy because the violence of the contestation acted to obliterate the meaning of the other. At a time in the 1980's and 90's when violence infused everyday this visuality startles violence as the replacement of morality. This confrontational iconography assumes indeterminacy and contestation. Conveying fear and threat is more effective and not accountable when depicted in anonymous generic form making the medium of the metaphorized paramilitary body the message. But the registration of terror at the level of image production carries a different effect than triumphant nationalism. One does not stand back and contemplate a dispute over two nations and ask: What is my nation? These murals did not start on the premise: We will make a work of art. Rather they express axes of contestation. Hence loyalist murals

combined portraits of killed members of its paramilitaries alongside camouflaged representations of its fighters, a strategy which presented a real fact in an artistic context that was meaningful because it was, and remained a real fact without changing function and becoming aestheticized. Echoing Constructivist notions providing radical perspectives on the socio political implications of art, the art here produced was not mimetic, nor was it the product of aestheticism's 'power of the imagination' nor was it ritual, but at once both art and action rooted in the present.

Fig. 52 Mural – UVF paramilitaries.

Unlike the King Billy iconography - a disembodied abstraction which did not necessarily depend on a complete catalogue of items in the visible plane, but merely a reference beyond itself through the seemingly perfect remainder to a perfect completeness, these images portray the contemporary champions of violence. And King Billy's replacement as the icon of abstracted collective identity is a macabre and violent sign depicted in a large mural in Derry which is a copy of a famous Iron Maiden LP cover, showing Eddie as a skeleton wielding a knife dripping with blood and carrying a Union Jack as he rampages through nationalist areas of Northern Ireland.

Fig. 53 Loyalist mural – Iron Maiden's Eddy

Collective Identity and meta-narrative

Alongside militarism various attempts have been made at constructing a unionist meta-narrative as an alternative to the historiography of King Billy. For example, a commonly recognized symbol of the island of Ireland is the harp in use as such before the Tudor invasion. It was the prime symbol of the United Irishmen in 1792 and of Irish nationalists. But as Derrida has demonstrated, naming is an originary act of violence whereby the structure of language itself violates the supposedly unique status of the proper name: "Anterior to the possibility of violence in the current and derivative sense," he argues, we find "the violence of the *arche*-writing, the violence of difference, of classification and of the system of appellations" (Derrida, 1976: pp. 110, 1632). It should therefore come as no surprise that the harp has come to also represent loyalist Irishmen when it is surmounted by the crown, and performatively deployed in this form on the cap badges of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (thereby giving the signifier the investment of legal authority).

The situation thus raises issues of appropriation, familiar from postcolonial interfaces but mobilized with a special intensity with the loyalist poaching of Cú Chulainn (The Hound of Ulster), or Setanta, a Celtic mythical figure who inspired the republican movement, and deployed as a symbol both of its Celtic origin and also of its resistance to colonial occupation. An impressive mural in Armagh is a complex image showing Cú Chulainn positioned among the fields and hills of Ireland, with a map of the

four provinces of Ireland and the words in Irish: "*Mise Éire mór mo gloir*" — I am Ireland, great is my glory. The image of Cú Chulainn commonly used in the murals is a replica of a bronze statue sculptured in 1911 by Oliver Sheppard which later came to stand as the symbol of the nationalist 'Rising', at Easter, 1916. Cú Chulainn's stand against the invading army of Queen Mebh of Connacht was seen by nationalists as representing the desperate gesture of the republican and socialist revolutionaries who declared a republic in the face of overwhelming odds. But the loyalist attempt to create a history from Cú Chulainn rests not on a cause but on an attempt to construct an ancestry. The attempt rests on the centrality of the Cruithin or Picts, the pre Celtic inhabitants of the north east of Ireland and the south west of Scotland. The Cruithin's power waned as the Celts, who had arrived in Ireland from continental Europe, expanded from the south and west of Ireland. Queen Mebh's attack on Ulster and Cú Chulainn's defence were thus easily reinterpreted. Mebh was a Celt, Cú Chulainn a Cruithin. According to this analogy Cú Chulainn came to be seen as in effect the first UDA man defending Ulster against the marauders from the south. Hence it is no surprise that a loyalist mural depicting Cú Chulainn shows him behind an armed member of the UDA, the union jack and emblems of the UDA with the writing: Ulster Present Day Defenders – Cú Chulainn ancient defender of Ulster from Irish attacks over 2000 years ago. This poaching of cultural property deploys the mural in conformity with the UDA political programme and simultaneously undermines the authority of the symbol in republican hands. It is a transparent attempt to locate its ancestry not in the plantation of Ireland but to a Cruithan or Pict pre-Celtic origin. However, this revisionist history has never been widely accepted in Unionist circles, particularly among the more middle class UUP. Rolston notes that the programmes of the UDA and the UUP are quite different (Rolston, 1995: pp. iii/iv). As a political symbol Cú Chulainn, the loyalist more easily represents the secessionist proposal of an 'independent Ulster' espoused from time to time by the UDA, rather than the desire to integrate fully with Britain, a policy dear to the UUP, which would rather read a grand narrative having its eschatological reduction in British hegemony and protestantism. A similar historical revisionism occurred in relation to the Red Hand of Ulster. Originally the symbol had belonged to the O' Neills, the rulers of the north whose uprising had nearly led to the sudden death of the Elizabethan plantation. Ignoring their origins in the plantation of Ireland, unionism has adopted the war cry of the Red Hand: The Red Hand to Victory. An offshoot group of the UVF adopted the name The Red Hand Commandos, and the symbol became a common image in loyalist murals during the 1980's. However the subtlety of this revisionism is conveniently overlooked by those using it. The myth on which the Red Hand is based, recounts that when two chieftains rushed to claim land near Lough Neagh, they agreed on whoever touched the land first would rule it. One chieftain cut off his left hand and threw it from the boat onto land, thus winning the race (Rolston, 1991: p. 36). But unionism is the child of imperial land

grabbing by English and Scots on Celtic land. Just as the unionist can take comfort in the political reality of the United Kingdom, so the unionist must concede that Ireland is his geographic home.

Politico-Historico context

Particularly in the last two centuries the equation has been established in many minds that to be Irish is to be catholic. This derives not least from the fact that the planters who colonized part of Ireland were Presbyterian and Anglican. But identifying Ireland as a nation in the modern sense is problematic. Arguably, it is a 'young' nation. It really only came into existence in the 1700s – a proposition supported by the 18th Century socialist republican, Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763-1798) suggesting people put aside religious identities and start seeing themselves as Irish. In the 'normal' course of events the religious identities would have been transcended by the full development of a nation and a requisite bourgeois nation-state. But British colonial interest was emphatic and militaristically powerful. Miriam Daly, the republican socialist killed by loyalist paramilitaries, pointed out in an article in the Irish Times of the 17th January, 1975 that Captain John Cooke's words written to Pitt in 1799 stressed the imperative of colonial control: 'The Union is the only means of preventing Ireland becoming too great and too powerful'. Colonial domination of Ireland and, as a necessary conjunct of English security, the partition of Ireland cemented the constraints against transcending the sectarian divide. Thus two centuries later in 1972 Sir Frederick Catherwood expressed it this way: 'Britain cannot afford a Palestinian type solution just off her Western coast. A quarter of a century after we pulled out there (Palestine), there is still fighting there ... but it is no longer a strategic area for us. Ireland is and always will be. So the necessity to extricate British troops is matched by a necessity to leave behind Governments capable of maintaining order on the island' that is to say devolved governments commanded by the English parliament. Consequently, the full emergence of an Irish nation was retarded by the requirements of British rule. The IRB (Irish Republican Brotherhood), a secret oath-bound fraternal organisation dedicated to the establishment of an independent democratic republic in Ireland during the mid-19th and early 20th centuries pointed out in its paper 'Irish Freedom' in its brief career, prior to WW1 that the component parts of the Irish nation tended to naturally merge but, every time this fairly natural process gained ground, strenuous political efforts would be made to keep them apart. This, for instance, would have been the likely outcome if the United Irishmen movement had succeeded. Following the failed rebellion by the United Irishmen of 1798, which represented an alliance of forces of landless Roman Catholic and Presbyterian businessmen and professionals to oppose English economic and political domination divisions that would have been transcended were not only maintained by Britain but deepened and strengthened. Rolston observes that

The Act of Union of 1801 which was introduced as a consequence of the rebellion '...was supposedly a stick to punish the Presbyterian middle class for its rebellion but it also became a carrot to entice that class to change its sense of identity and provided the basis for cessation of rivalries between the planters (Rolston, 1991: p. 69).[i]

The United Irishmen rebellion finds its roots in The Protestant Ascendancy which is generally understood as a period of domination by a minority of protestant land owners (who came to own the land through expropriation and colonial allocation during the 17th century), protestant clergy and professionals all members of the state Churches, Anglican and Church of Ireland. Presbyterian and other protestant denominations along with the marginalized majority catholic population were initially excluded from the indices of politico-economic power although this changed with the Act of Union when economic and political opportunities linked to England were opened up to all protestants. Whereas ascendancy ought to have translated as 'hegemony', it in fact was used as a synonym for domination as emerges from Edmund Burke's letter to Richard Burke – '...the resolution of one set of people in Ireland...to keep a dominion over the rest by reducing them to absolute slavery under a military power' (McDowell,1970: p. 643). The phrase 'Protestant Ascendancy' suggests less a single class than a social bloc, spanning nobility, gentry and bourgeoisie, whose social differences are less important than their shared political and religious ideology, transcending suggestions of docile groupings, political set ups and class difference; it furthermore betrays a grammatical ambivalence, for it can mean an ascendancy which is protestant or the ascendancy of Protestantism. In effect however, it is that the sway of protestant religion is to be defended as a way of safeguarding the political supremacy which is protestant. At stake is not the religion but the ideological function where the meaning of the ascendancy of Protestantism resides wholly in protestant political rule. Terry Eagleton notes that thus evolved the notion that, 'Protestantism was both a necessary and sufficient qualification to gain access to the elite, that hegemonic rights belonged to the entire body of protestants by virtue merely of their Protestantism' (Eagleton, 1995: p. 35).

An alliance of the different protestant classes provided strategic political and economic advantages for each and despite differences of class, ideology and politics, the alliances forged at the turn of the century exist to this day; unionists are those who wish to preserve the political link between Northern Ireland and Britain; nationalists are those who wish to sever that link in favour of a united Ireland. As a result 'Irish Nationalism and Catholicism became increasingly intertwined and indistinguishable' (Rolston 1991: p.69). The partition of Ireland one hundred and twenty years later in 1921 provided the means to institutionalise and strengthen the sectarian division. The Republican/nationalist working class was confined geographically, politically and culturally to its own clearly defined ghettoes (Rolston 1991: p.70). Gerrymandering by the majority, job discrimination,

discrimination in housing, hospital and educational allocations and funding led northern nationalists to become reluctant citizens of the new state of Northern Ireland. Unindividuated responses sprung readily in the collective life, rebellious on the nationalist minority side, overbearing and punitive on the majority side. Landon Hancock, *Northern Ireland: Troubles Brewing* [5] has provided extensive coverage of the discriminatory practices against the marginalized catholic community. I have paraphrased these observations in an endnote after this chapter. [ii]

Portraying collective identity in its embodied format requires dramatic performance and this unionism located with ease in a predilection for public practices of oratory, calendar celebrations, dramatic enactments and ritualized encounter, such as flag flying, parades and processions, bonfires, effigy burnings, handshaking, banners, curbstone and mural painting. The term 'Public' here has to do with spectatorship, rather than a Habermassian sense of shared civic interest. The King Billy mural formed a pivotal axis governing contact and spatial management of the annual unionist celebrations on the twelfth of July (colloquially, the Twelfth). The Twelfth was no accident; the date coincides with the date of King William's victory at the Boyne in 1690 which, in that year, occurred on the twelfth of July.[iii] The celebrations, which began with a dedication of a King Billy mural that was painted for the celebration (repainted/touched up in each consecutive year) marked an annual display which at first glance may have appeared loosely theatrical but which was a carefully staged dramatic form developed on the convention of King Billy's heroic conquest, and governed by a consensus invested in the consolidated effects of state power, religion and capitalism. The very existence of the state articulated this triumph; and the tension between the sectarian constraints was augmented by atavism and bigotry which once led catholic's to flee the city, as loyalists carried anti-catholic banners, made anti-catholic speeches and roared out anti-catholic tunes. Flag flying (the Union Jack, the Union flag and the flag of the Orange Order), the street arches erected in working class protestant areas, banners, bunting and paraphernalia - sashes, collarettes, bowler hats, painting curb stones and poles red white and blue and marching 'Blood and Thunder' bands with loud drumming, screeching flutes and accordions strutting and baton twirling transformed the city into an arena of triumphalism and ascendency.

A representative dignitary (a cabinet minister, judge, army officer or businessman) dedicated the King Billy mural. Rolston states: "...in a real sense the actual words spoken did not matter, nor did the quality of the painting" (Rolston 1991: p.22). Although there is an element of the merely performative as theorized by Austin conjoining words to the material world in these dedications, the consolidated meaning strengthened by these power relations does not master the play of Derrida's notion of *différance*

[5] On line at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/landon.htm retrieved 07/06/2010.

and provide a safe haven for Unionism from undecidability. These celebrations assume a specific interpretive community – one that is able to note that the point of articulation of the dedicated text is a convention of protestant ascendancy regardless of class. But tension generated by the transference from the 17th century planters to contemporary Ireland throws up ironic inconsistencies and parody in which the possibility of speaking or performing as another is precisely what undermines the sectarian mapping. It is true that beside insult, historicization is diminished. These notions gain strength from the emergence of the chilling imagery that replaced the curious Victorian imagery of King Billy.

The Militarized Mural

Loyalist murals form an axis of contestation with republicanism but also internally with rival factions. The formation of a united alliance among loyalist groups was problemetized by a number of factors. Inconsistencies to British hegemonic control, with some groups pressing for total integration while others had secessionist aims, hindered its homogeneous possibilities. Locating the roots of one's identity in the ethnic and liturgical habits of one's group might be all very well, but for the group to confine the range of one's growth, to have one's sympathies determined and one's responses programmed by it was patently another form of entrapment. A mural in Hopewell Crescent dedicated to Jackie Coulter, a UDA commander ("Lieutenent") and associate of Johnny "Mad Dog" Adair who was shot dead in his car in 2000 by a rival UVF gunman presents a drastic example of inter-loyalist tensions. Following World War II welfare reforms introduced in Britain and Northern Ireland responded to the growth of socialism among the working class and trade unionism which clouded national sentiment with that of the priority of class. And Neil Jarman, Research director of the Institute for Conflict Research has suggested that the penetration of transnational capital weakened the base of local Unionist capital and finally the military campaign of the IRA called unionist identity into question (Jarman, 1998).

The murals installed these discursivities. The medium of an installation is the space itself. In this sense space is not abstract or neutral; because it is spatial the installation is by all means material not symbolic. The mural is not a visual study alone since that restricts them to what can be considered an image in the traditional sense of artwork as object. But everything that can be presented in an installation space belongs to the realm of the visual art. In that sense an individual image is also an installation: it is simply an installation that has been reduced to a single image. The installation thus defines the rules for space by which the image and the non-image functions as spatial objects.

The loyalist factions produced defining emblems (flags and crests) which they incorporated in their own murals alongside their own acronyms such as UDA, UFF, UVF and the LVF.[iv] The murals

emerged in adjoining housing estates which to all outward appearances are quite seamless were it not for the presence of the murals. Understood in this sense the murals provide an index to the territorial influence and control exercised by the different loyalist factions. For example the mural at the entrance to Sandy Row, painted in the summer of 2001 which shows armed and hooded UDA men, states - You are now entering loyalist Sandy Row, heartland of South Belfast Ulster Freedom Fighters - is a message as much to the UVF, the subordinate loyalist group in the area as to nationalists and republicans. They make a more permanent affirmation than the seasonal celebrations of the Twelfth and hence have helped to transform areas where 'Protestants lived' into 'Protestant areas' (Jarman, 1998: ibid).

But these murals are not the installation only of images, texts or other elements of which they are composed; the space of their display also plays a decisive role. They function as documents of a certain life situation. The placing of this documentation in the space is thus not a neutral act of showing but an act which achieves, at the level of space an inscription in life; that is to say that the mural has a particular site – and through this particular site the original is inscribed into history as a unique object. It carries with it the aura articulated through Benjamin.

Fig. 54 Loyalist mural – Hopewell Crescent

Fig. 55 Loyalist mural - Sandy Row

Benjamin's distinction between the original and the copy has a dimension of violence. In fact he speaks not just of the loss of aura but of its destruction. And the violence of the destruction of aura is not the less because it is invisible. On the contrary, material injury to the original is less violent because the injury still inscribes itself in the history of the original by leaving behind certain traces. The deterritorialization of the original, in Benjamin's view, its removal from its site represents by contrast an invisible and thus all the more devastating employment of violence because it leaves behind no material trace. In the context of divisive paramilitary tension the mural's territory and its protection was thus a conflation of threat and counter threat. For example the contrast between adjacent and otherwise seamless areas is apparent between the Village and Roden Street. At the head of Roden Street a large memorial to John McMichael, a former leader of the UDA, incorporates references to the local flute band, the Roden Street defenders and the UFF. In nearby streets there are a number of UDA emblems and a hooded UFF gunman, as well as the King Billy. There are no references to other paramilitary groups. But only a few streets away in the Village, the murals proclaim support for the UVF and the small Red Hand Commando paramilitary group. Jarman suggests that although the people of Sandy Row, Donegall Pass, Roden Street and the Village are united by their membership of the Orange Order, documented in the numerous murals with the Order as their subject matter, this alone has not removed the hostility between them. Each of the four areas has a prominent painting of King Billy and five of the ten King Billy paintings in the city were in this small area. At Rockland Street, in the village, a King Billy had occupied the same site since the late

1920's. However, King Billy on Sandy row has been adapted to the context of the Troubles; here he is accompanied by two gunmen, one in 17th Century costume and the other in contemporary fatigues. An adjacent scroll bears the words: We the loyalist people of Sandy Row remember with pride the 300th Anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne. No Surrender. (Signed) UFF. Here most importantly the UFF have appropriated the iconography of the King to support their faction rather than the tradition of unionism. Elsewhere, apart from a small UVF painting, UDA murals dominate Sandy Row, and, in response to the IRA ceasefire of September 1994, the UDA presence was reaffirmed. Two new UDA and UFF murals were painted and a UDA shield was added beside King Billy. In contrast, in nearby Donegal Pass there are no references to the UDA: the most prominent murals, besides King Billy, commemorate the 36th Ulster Division and the Battle of the Somme. One depicts three soldiers with heads bowed mourning their fallen comrades, while nearby the emblem of the South Belfast Young Conquerors Flute Band is incorporated among the symbols of the UVF, the YCV, the Royal Irish Rifles and the 36th Ulster Division. The most recent addition, in late 1995 was an elaborate memorial mural to the UVF dead, depicting a piper playing a lament for fallen comrades. Through such displays of support for the paramilitary groups the sense of distinction and local identity is displayed and a clear difference is drawn between neighbouring loyalist areas (Jarman, 1998, ibid).

Just as these images are understood to occupy visually a space in real life, they embody their own threat; the emphasis is on an antagonistic force of signs; they also mark antagonism of a force to other forces. Their potentiality thus denotes their power as signs to designate and mediate an event and the capacity of events to impact on discursive production. An image of how such potentials of action and discourse interact is given by Deleuze and Guattari in terms of hijacking:

> In an airplane hijacking, the threat of a hijacker brandishing a revolver is obviously an action; so is the execution of the hostages if it occurs. But the transformation of the passengers into hostages and of the plane body into a prison body is an instantaneous incorporeal transformation, a 'mass media act' in the sense in which the English speak of 'speech acts'
> (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: p. 81)

The potentiality of the murals expresses how a state of affairs is precipitated and made possible. Very often this possibility exists as an effective power in itself. For example Bill Rolston writes in *Changing the Political Landscape: Murals and Transition in Northern Ireland* that in August 2000 a 'celebration of loyalist culture' took place, centred on the dedication of thirteen new murals painted in Hopewell Crescent. An estimated 10,000 people attended. The main protagonist driving the event was the Ulster

Defence Association. Although it constituted the 'second largest paramilitary group in the area' the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was absent but the LVF which was based in the Portadown district was invited and did attend. One of the thirteen murals to be dedicated portrayed Billy Wright, founder of the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF). He was not named as such, but below his portrait was painted his nickname—'King Rat'—and above, the slogan 'Loyalist Martyr', whom Johnny Adair leader of the UDA known as 'Mad Dog', was keen to emulate. The Shankill UVF was incensed and only agreed to the LVF presence in their territory after assurances from Adair that no LVF flags or emblems would be displayed on the day. At the moment of the dedication a number of masked UDA men read out a statement and fired shots in the air. However killing also took place. Bill Rolston reports:

> Those were not the only shots fired that day. As the bands paraded on the main Shankill Road, a UDA contingent unfurled an LVF flag outside the Rex Bar, where the clientele were UVF members and sympathisers. In the fracas that followed, Adair led an attack on the bar, during which shots were fired injuring a number of customers. The trouble spread to the rest of the lower Shankill. When the dust settled a few weeks later, seven members of the UDA and UVF were dead—ironically, one for each mural. One of the dead, UVF man Sam Rockett, merited his own mural in Disraeli Street alongside those of two other members: Trevor King, killed by the INLA on 9 July 1994 , and Brian Robinson, shot dead by British army undercover agents on 2 September 1989. The feud had also led to the intimidation of around 1,000 people from their homes if they happened to be supporters of the 'wrong' dominant paramilitary group in the area. As a result, the lower Shankill is now UDA territory, while the middle Shankill is UVF. New murals for each group now prominently mark the territory, warning not just nationalists, but also loyalists, who is in charge.
>
> — Rolston, *Changing the Political Landscape: Murals and Transition in Northern Ireland, p. 4*

Fig. 56. Loyalist mural – King Rat.

Central to these murals is an incorporeal transformation that is constructed in the act of effecting and affecting a reality, so that each instance admits a certain performative contingency. And since the constructed reality is only provisional, uncertainty foregrounds the message contained in the mural. These murals provide a sharp contrast with the transformation that has taken place with the Early Bourgeois mural. In that mural the prevailing convention of the Federal Republic of Germany has invested its own signification in the mural's iconography, deploying, by contrast with the demised authority of the German Democratic Republic, rhetorical tropes that match its own convention. But in these Northern Ireland murals, the protagonists size up each other across politico-cultural divides. Here the murals' surveillance is not a pure representation, for they entail their own fingering and scanning mediation and secure what they survey only by exploding into diagrams of their own potential.

Republican Murals

> Soldier: You mean to starve? You will have none of it?
> I'll leave it there, where you can sniff the savour.
> Snuff it, old hedgehog, and unroll yourself.
> But if I were the King, I'd make you do it
> With wisps of lighted straw.
> —*The Kings Threshold*, by W. B. Yeats.

Theatrical precision and clarity, terseness and accuracy of gesture are qualities which mark the murals either side of the contested line. These qualities strengthen the political narrative driving the imagery. While they remained unchallenged in the hands of unionism's King Billy, in form as in content the notion of the spectacle articulated by Guy DeBord (2009: p. 24) served as total justification for the conditions and aims informing the power relations of Unionism's homogeneity of protestant ascendancy. However this justification was dislodged with the appearance of the republican murals. The republican murals did not materialize a popular tradition; rather they were sprung from political agitprop engaging the potentials of the hunger strike. They no longer reflected the 'heart of society's unreality' (Debord), but rather they revealed a naked, vulnerable desiring body that was covered by the conservative system of social conventions. But the imagery was not predicated on symbolism as a source of meaning; their distinction lies in linking the provisionality of incarcerated bodily decay and mural imagery to the performative potential of violence. Their coding was accordingly deliberate, unambiguous and the message indelible. For example the Maze Compound Prison's (previously known as Long Kesh) H Block is invoked in a mural with the writing H Block – the Dehumanising Factor painted above an emaciated crawling figure and the ~~-~~prayer Lord may their Sacrifice Like Yours not be In Vain. A mural in Oakman Street shows a portrait of Bobby Sands and a series of emaciated figures being crucified and tortured. The paint is white on a black background. It is accompanied by the following ~~-~~writing The Irish Republican Army is right. The British government does not listen to the ballot box in Ireland and the only thing they will listen to in Ireland is what they listened to in other colonies: agitation, rebellion and armed forces.

The murals served a double purpose: first, constructing a visual mythology of power for people who felt powerless and victimized and second, illustrating conditions that made physical force and armed groupings seem necessary. In the latter way they encouraged metaphoric revolutionary action, brutally

(fighting oppression through self-help) and physically (armed confrontation), simultaneously eliciting revulsion at the threatened violence and attraction to the idea of effective self-defence. In many cases they have acted to incite the disenfranchised to action, portraying the marginalized communities with genuine empathy, not as victims but as outraged, unapologetic and ready for a fight.

Fig. 57 Hunger strike mural (1)

The Blanket Protest

In July 1972 in response to a republican hunger strike, the British Government conceded 'Special Category (or political) Status' (SCS) to all prisoners convicted of Troubles related offences. SCS was de facto 'prisoner of war' status providing POW protection under the Geneva Convention. However as part of its so called 'criminalization' policy dealing with terrorism in Northern Ireland in the context of civil liberties and human rights, the British government withdrew the SCS in March 1976. The first prisoner convicted under the new law Kevin Nugent refused a prison uniform saying he was not a criminal but a political prisoner. He was locked in his cell where he wrapped himself in the blanket that was on the bed rather than remain naked. This was the same action taken by old IRA prisoners in the south in the 1940s. The 'blanket protest 'was reborn and soon other prisoners followed his example. By 1978 nearly 300 Republican prisoners were refusing to wear prison uniforms. Prison blocks H3, H4, H5 and most of H6

were filled with Blanketmen (Clarke, 1987: pp. 65-66). By the autumn of 1980, there were 1365 Republican prisoners, and of the 837 Republicans who did not have special category status, 341 were on the blanket and dirty protest (Bell, 1997: p. 492). The blanket men were confined to their cells, without clothes, reading material or furniture, except for a mattress which was taken away during the day. Details provided in their investigation of prison conditions by Campbell, McKeown and O'Hagan, (1994) show that the prisoners also had to suffer beatings and harassment from the prison warders. Chamber pots used by the prisoners were constantly kicked onto the floor by prison guards, and prisoners were beaten when trying to empty them outside. The prisoners were soon forced to smear the over-flowing excrement on the cell walls in order to keep the floors dry. In March 1978, the 'dirty protest' was officially started. By April 1980, the IRA killed a total of 18 prison officers in an effort to exert pressure for return to SCS.

But the deteriorating H-Block situation did not seem to be a priority for the organization. Liam Clark (1997: pp. 91-92) points out that in a major interview in August 1978 an IRA army council representative failed to mention the H Block situation and in the Sinn Féin newspaper *Republican News'* three page review of 1979, the prisoners got just one economic column inch of copy. Outside the prisons, the bulk of the campaign against criminalisation was led by the relatives of the prisoners, the Relatives Action Committees (RAC), and based directly on the nationalist working class. A statement from the central RAC under the headline Prisoners are not a Civil Rights Issue in the *Republican News*, made the point:

> We have always maintained a firm line that our campaign is to establish that a war of national liberation is being waged in Ireland. While in the past we have publicized the inhumane conditions of the POWs...we have not allowed ourselves to be sidetracked into seeing the prisoners as a civil rights issue, rather than a political issue ... the sharp end of the campaign should be directly cutting against criminalization while the rudder is steering for 'Brits Out.
>
> —Republican News, 10 December, 1977. p. 9

After four years of living under increasingly intolerable conditions created by the blanket and dirty protests, the prisoners launched a hunger strike in the autumn of 1980. In December 1980, with one prisoner near death, the British government appeared to accede to the prisoners' demands. The prisoners were presented with a document of the government's concessions and the strike was ended. However, in January 1981, the British government resumed criminalization. A new hunger strike began on the 1 March 1981, exactly five years after the withdrawal of SCS, led by IRA volunteer Bobby Sands. Writing

in his diary on the first seventeen days of the hunger strike, Sands made it clear that it was a political and not a humanitarian question that was at stake:

> I am a political prisoner. I am a political prisoner because I am a casualty of a perennial war that is being fought between the oppressed Irish people and an alien, oppressive, unwanted regime that refuses to withdraw from our land.
> — Sands *Writings from Prison*. 1997 (The Prison diary)

This hunger strike, which focused world attention on the situation in Ireland, resulted in the death of ten prisoners between May and August 1981: Bobby Sands, Francis Hughes, Ray McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara died in May, Joe McDonnell and Martin Hurson died in July, Kevin Lynch, Kieran Doherty, Tom McElwee and Micky Devine died in August. Seven of the hunger strikers belonged to the IRA and three to the INLA. The hunger strikes ended when, in October 1981, with mounting pressure on the prisoners' families from the Catholic Church, some of the prisoners' families gave permission to administer food to the remaining hunger strikers after they lapsed into unconsciousness. The way the British government dealt with the hunger strikes gave the Republican Movement a new lease of life on a scale not seen since Bloody Sunday. The mass movement which had been on the decline since 1972 experienced an upsurge. The 100,000 people who attended Bobby Sands' funeral were an indication of the extent of the anger of ordinary nationalist people (Beresford, 1987).

The Murals

Republican murals have emerged from this landscape of performative power. But they were not birthed in a fine art tradition nor locked in a sense of iconic universalism (as happened with King Billy) but rather they were sprung from graffiti supporting the 'blanket protestors'. Bill Rolston points out that there was no popular tradition of visual representation of nationalist symbols and historic events and that 'most noticeably there was no working class tradition of mural painting such as existed at the time in unionist areas.' (Rolston, 1991: p. 71) Prior to the 1981 Hunger Strike, Republican messages on walls were mostly confined to slogans, for example—Will Lizzie visit the H Block—coinciding with the Queen's visit to the North in 1977. By the time of the Hunger Strike the slogans had transferred from angry anti language to a distinctive visual signage. For example the wall in Lenadoon Avenue Belfast showed a Fianna Éireann flag and an orange sunburst (the youth section of the IRA and its symbol), a coffin and the letter 'H' representing the cellular prison block where the blanket protest and hunger strike occurred

accompanied by the writing in Irish—Tiocfaidh an lá nuair beidh Eire saoir aris (The day will come when Ireland will be free again). In Ardglen Crescent, Belfast the writing—You cannot put a rope around the neck of an idea—accompanied a portrait of Bobby Sands, a silhouette of Long Kesh prison and a stylised Irish tricolour. In the Creggan area of Derry four frames graphically illustrated the 'conveyor belt of justice' with the republican prisoner processed from arrest, through beating during interrogation, non jury courts and finally on the blanket refusing to be termed anything other than a political prisoner.

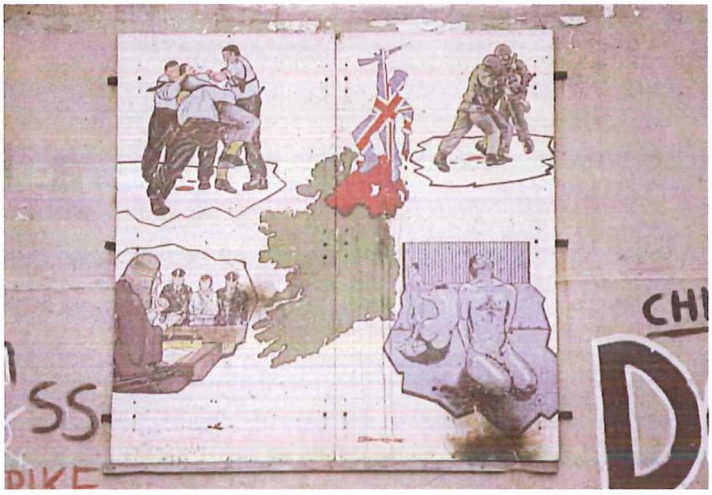


Fig. 58 Hunger strike mural (2)

For the republican activist and muralist, Danny Devenny who while imprisoned began drawing on handkerchiefs and scraps of paper there was a very simple reason for the lack of nationalist murals up to this point.

> We were living in a state dominated by unionists. There was a riot in 1964 after republicans put up a tricolour in Divis Street. What do you think the reaction would have been to a mural? With the coming of the H-Block blanket protests and hunger strikes by IRA men over political status in the late 1970s and early 1980s, republicans searched for ways to express their position amid media "self censorship", The graffiti during this period wasn't a case of seeking to be bellicose and belligerent. There was a policy of criminalization and containment of nationalists. But many kids saw the blanket men as heroes. The graffiti and the murals that followed were these kids telling the state, 'they have our support'.
>
> — The Financial Times, 3rd January 2009.

These murals present all the signs of growing out of the politics and culture of the community. Its measure as revolutionary art, paraphrasing Gramski's concept is the extent to which it is organic to the political movement, underlined by Trotsky's argument in the debate over culture and art in the worker state, which is simple and clear:

> Bohemian artists and political revolutionaries both stood in opposition to the conservatism of Russia's Czarist society. But it was the success of the political revolution that opened a channel for artistic rebellion to play a socially progressive role.
>
> — Leon Trotsky, 1960: *Literature and Revolution*. (Chapter 1- Pre revolutionary Art).

However these first murals are a particular kind of art, one which, while linked to a political dimension, is separable from a political programme. Thus although allied to the IRA campaign of revolutionary resistance and insurgency for a 32 county Ireland Republic, they stood apart from the programme of its political wing Sinn Féin. Published in *An Poblachtach/Republican News* (APRN) on the 5th Sept 1981, p.20 under the headline *IRA attitude on elections*, the IRA's stance in 1981 regarding constitutional politics was "quite simple and clear cut...outside of a thirty-two county sovereign independent democracy, the IRA will have no involvement in what is loosely called constitutional politics." This resistance to constitutional politics is borne out by the experience of the hunger strikers who issued a statement ending the hunger strike reported in *APRN*, 10 Oct 1981, pp.12-13, under the headline *Why We Ended the Hunger Strikes* in which they pointed out that their experience showed the limitations of calling on political establishment and Church leaders to demand the British government to make concessions. It showed that the British government would not respond to diplomatic protests and electoral successes. According to the prisoners, it proved that Fianna Fail (the youth wing of the IRA) and the SDLP (Social Democratic Liberal Party) and the rest of the broad campaign not only failed from putting pressure on the British government, but actually played a central role in undermining the campaign. These conclusions are far removed from the principles on which the peace process was ultimately based. This is why Richard English (English, 2003: pp. 205/6) is absolutely right to point out: "Despite much latter-day assumption about the inevitability of post-1981 republicanism moving in a Sinn Féinish, electoral direction, the prisoners at the time in fact drew, if anything, the opposite lesson. A close reading of the archival evidence undermines the (now popular) view that the 1981 experience pointed unambiguously towards the rewards which electoral politics and more conventional political methods offered". Richard O'Rawe, who was the IRA prisoner's press officer at the time when Sands was dying whose book on the death fast, *Blanketmen* claimed that six of Sands' fellow prisoners could have been saved if the republican

leadership had accepted a compromise deal from Margaret Thatcher, is able to corroborate this observation from personal experience:

> Bobby was a left-winger. He did not think a united Ireland was worth it unless it was a socialist Ireland. I know that because he told me inside the H-blocks. Bobby did not die so we would be where we are now - with Sinn Fein working inside a British-controlled parliament.
>
> — Reported in the The Observer, Sunday May 11, 2008. [6]

By the spring and summer of 1981 the visual signage that street activism produced multiplied into hundreds of murals. Bill Rolston points out that the murals were formulated on two themes – the hunger strike and the armed campaign of the IRA (Rolston, 1992: p. iv). Painted by young men and women, not artists but members of a community driving an insurgency, and not intended to aestheticize nor provide designs for Sinn Féin's oppositional emancipatory political programme, these murals have an unmatched autonomous territory of resistance. To this extent the hunger strike murals did not convert the hunger strike into an artistic emblem. They avoided passive, humanitarian representation of the hunger strike victims; the imagery is militaristic and defiant. This can be illustrated from a mural which appeared in Whiterock Road, Belfast—a complex image which shows a dying hunger striker, an armed IRA member and an angel with Irish tricolour and shields of the four provinces of Ireland is consolidated under the text: Their Hunger-Their Pain-Our Struggle.

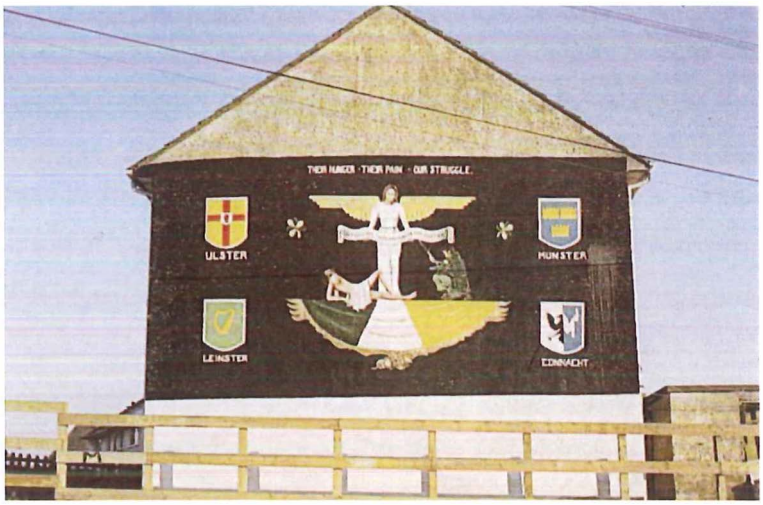


Fig. 59. Hunger strike mural (3).

[6] On line at http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2008/may/11/cannesfilmfestival.northernireland retrieved 20/06/08.

This mural at once references traditional religious iconography, martyrdom and resurrection, the resurrection being the restoration of the four provinces of Ireland to be achieved strategically through armed insurgency. But it does not dwell on pain as a universal abstraction. Here pain is specific to the person of the hunger striker. Hence its moral content does not link to a specific political programme. Rather the representation of its political vision (the resurrection of the four provinces) is derived from the brutality of hunger and pain. This means that the question of whether the mural is morally or aesthetically good or bad is irrelevant. Rather, the deployment of the mural as a sign of resistance and struggle coupled with the incorporation in the mural of the very same religious iconography that the dominant power has used for the distribution of its own cultural heritage awakens consciousness and illuminates the brutality underpinning the ruling material and intellectual forces of the dominant discourse.

Fig. 60 Hunger strike mural (4)

The invocation of this imagery is also linked to direct military action in many other murals appearing in the same period. In Rockville Street, Belfast four armed republicans with weapons upheld deliver the 'final salute' in tribute to with the Starry Plough of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, the Irish Tricolour and the first names of ten hunger strikers. Another example from Rockville Street, Belfast which reads—They may kill the revolutionary but never the revolution—accompanies a heroic Irish Republican army volunteer, another is the mural in Rockmore Road in which an IRA active service unit is represented in action based on an incident in July 1979 when 18 members of the British army's parachute regiment were killed at Narrow Water, County Down; yet another is the mural in Ardoyne Avenue, Belfast in which four armed and hooded IRA members with flames depicting rebirth and shields of two

provinces of Ireland are shown. A striking mural depicts a crouching combatant holding an armelite weapon placed in the upper half of a black painted wall. The text to his right in green paint reads Armed Struggle; to the left in yellow paint—Peoples Politics. The combatant crouches on bold lettering in green, white and yellow Revolution. Below this painted in red a group of people holding weapons and flags in triumph is seen in silhouette marching along and off the wall. In Berwick Avenue, Belfast an emaciated blanketman is shown crawling on the prison floor curtained on either side with the writing—For those who believe no explanation is necessary – For those who don't believe no explanation is possible.

These images present a potential for engagement precisely because the landscape of power and violence in Belfast does not just include 'physical force' but also the discursivity of legislation. Not only do the murals challenge the Special Category Status legislation, but they bring into question the legislative authority of the British parliament. In his perceptive analysis of the Republican movement, Kevin Bean makes the point that the hunger strike period was the last great wave of republican street activism (Bean, 2007: p. 67). Henry Pattersen points out that before the end of the decade, the organization would gradually become co-opted into the institutions it was supposed to overthrow by means of "effective incorporation through the pressure of electoral considerations and clientelist expectations" (Pattersen, 1989: p. 192). In November 1981, Danny Morrison (at that time Sinn Féin director, and IRA activist) made a speech reported in An Poblachtach/Republican News (*APRN)* (November 5 1981, p. 2) under the headline *By Ballot and Bullet* in which he famously declared: "Who here really believes that we can win the war through the ballot box? But will anyone here object if with a ballot paper in this hand, and an Armalite in this hand, we take power in Ireland?" With this performative action, in the sense understood by Austin, violence and constitutional politics were strategized in the political rhetoric of the 'Armalite and Ballot Box' in which elections in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland were contested by Sinn Féin, while the IRA continued to pursue a paramilitary struggle against the British Army, the Royal Ulster Constabulary and loyalist paramilitary groups. This strategy would suggest that the purpose of contesting elections and giving an increasingly important role to the political wing, Sinn Féin was not in order to become a respectable constitutional party, (which is not conceivable while its armed wing carried out acts of violence), but was to introduce a new tactic in the anti-imperialist struggle—the use of the ballot box besides the Armalite (AR-18 assault rifles) was an indication of military weakness. In 1984, under the headline '*The IRA has to do what the IRA has to do'*, reported in the Magill magazine, September 1984 Morrison admitted: "If the IRA was an absolutely huge well-armed guerilla army there would probably be no need for electoral politics. Because in most revolutionary struggles going to the ballot box takes place at the conclusion, the successful conclusion, of the armed struggle...rather than in the middle of the guerilla war, as is experimentally happening with the

Republican Movement in the Six Counties." The reasons advanced for electoral interventions were that it showed that the national struggle was political, not criminal, in nature. It also refuted the British government's propaganda that the republicans were a small isolated group receiving no substantial support and it destabilized the British strategy of constitutional nationalism which demanded the representation of the nationalist community in the north by constitutional nationalist parties like the Social Democratic and Labour Parties.

But as Derrida has shown, performative acts joining language to action do not guarantee context and are never complete. In his work Bean argues that whatever the intentions of the leadership, the reality was that the "Armalite and the Ballot Box" was more dichotomy than realistic strategy. A key change represented by the electoral strategy was that the "active subjectivity of the political project was replaced by the idea of the activist as mandated delegate" (Bean, 2007: p. 68). In other words, in place of a community mobilised against the state, the community would be represented within the state by Sinn Féin, although at this stage only in local government chambers (Bean, 2007: p. 70 and p. 97). Thus he observes, increasingly a new rhetoric of mandates and consent developed out of working in "a political context defined by the structures and policy framework of the British state" and this later provided a model for the peace process (p.70) and the development of a "provisional quangocracy" (p.97).

With its drift to constitutional politics Sinn Féin appropriated the revolutionary movement's militaristic murals in order to form a strategic element in a two pronged political project. On the one hand the programme fronted the IRA thereby establishing the illusion of armed strength, that is to say that it created the subjunctive effect of terrorism, articulated by Derrida as a strategy of war producing a fear of what might be but which far exceeded the groups capabilities (Borradori, 2003); however on the other hand Sinn Féin strategically broadened its support base by appealing on humanitarian grounds to the wider bourgeois element. Intertwined with the factor of the political programme was that of the legislation. Hence in order to further its programme the criminilization legislation was contested not as a matter of revolutionary insurgency but as one of democratic politics. [v] Consequently the hunger strike murals were gradually phased out and replaced on one hand with militaristic imagery supporting the IRA programme, while on the other they contained overt political slogans and electioneering favouring electoral success for Sinn Féin. In this way the political programme of the emancipatory political party poached these powerful works. Thus in Beechmount Avenue, Belfast a large mural formatted as though it were a poster, shows the female figure of a personified Ireland pulling back the Irish tricolour to reveal marching citizens carrying placards. The mural promotes the electoral campaign with the writing: For a New Ireland, Vote Sinn Féin – Adams. Murals such as this one garnered support from past republican heroes' regardless of whether the class politics of these past giants of Irish socialism were being

advanced. For example a portrait of James Connolly with Irish tricolour and starry plough proclaims: Let Us Rise. James Connolly (1868-1916) was a socialist revolutionary who stood unambiguously for emancipation—social, economic and national. His originality was that he placed the Irish working class firmly in the vanguard of the struggle for national liberation. Connolly declared that, "[t]he Irish working class must emancipate itself, and in emancipating itself it must, perforce, free its country." [7] The liberated Ireland that Connolly envisaged was one free not only from the shackles of British imperialism but also from the exploitative relations of capitalism. These objectives are blithely ignored in the mural; in this way the workers struggle is conflated with the struggle for national independence. Similarly a portrait and quote from a co-leader of the 1916 uprising Patrick Pearse: From the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations, is a transparently mediated attempt to annex the death of the hunger strikers to the 1916 rebellion and in turn to the electoral campaign. The campaign was spread widely to include the entire community in the struggle. Murals promoted Solidarity between women in armed struggle, for example. An interesting mural in Hawthorn Street, Belfast is a figurative representation of four women in trench coats carrying rifles over their shoulders. Painted in sepia and black the mural takes on a faded photographic appearance. Writing on the mural in Irish shows that it is: Dedicated to the armed members of Cumann na mBan, Oglaigh na h Eireann 1916 - The women's armed contingency of the 1916 uprising in Ireland. Alongside the image are the portraits of two of its members, Winifred Carney and Nora Connolly and the chorus of the song: The Soldiers of Cumann na mBan. Tellingly however, the mural is signed Sinn Féin which thereby appropriates that historical movement to itself. The mural campaign also gained to itself the appearance of international revolutionary comradeship through imagery expressing solidarity with revolutionary movements in other parts of the world such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the African National Congress and the Basque separatist ETA movement. Portraits of Che Guevarra, Lenin appeared on walls in West Belfast, Derry, Ardoyne and other areas of Northern Ireland.

[7] On line at http://www.solidarity.net.au/24/james-connolly%E2%80%94socialism-and-the-struggle-for-irish-independence retrieved 10/03/10.

Fig. 61 Republican mural - The Soldiers of Cumann na mBan

These murals form an integral part of what Bean has described as a counter-culture within the revolutionary movement. He suggests that no (revolutionary) movement can sustain itself purely on the basis of oppositionism and that by definition it generates some sort of positive counter-culture. In the case of Irish republicanism in Northern Ireland, this counter culture which was not particularly resistant was co-opted into the framework of the prevailing discourse. Noting that its political level was oppositional to the state, but held within it many disparate currents – which is an issue that ultimately addresses a central problem of Irish nationalism itself, he points out: "Often, it seems to be more of a discourse about the particular terms of a relationship to Britain, as opposed to a complete break. You can often understand Irish nationalism, going back to the time of home rule, as about the terms of trade, as opposed to no bargaining at all...At its core is the relationship to Britain'.[8] The growth of this counter culture is perhaps no more evident than in the mediation of the images of the hunger strikers, Bobby Sands and Mairead Farrell in which their iconic status is deployed to the broader community. For example, the mural showing Bobby Sands' portrait on a wall of the Sinn Féin offices in which his confident and smiling portrait is framed alongside breaking chains and freedom doves and his words: Everyone, republican or otherwise has his/her own part to play. Our revenge shall be the laughter of our children. [vi]

[8] Interview given by Kevin Bean reported in The Sovereign Nation –The Republican Voice, August/September 2008.

Fig. 62 Republican mural – Bobby Sands

But as Bobby Sands wrote on the 1st March 1981, he was "a casualty of a perennial war . . . fought between the oppressed Irish people and an alien, oppressive, unwanted regime that refuses to withdraw from our land" (ibid, the Prison Diary); his death on the hunger strike was the antithesis and total rejection of constitutional engagement. The symbolism of broken chains carries credibility socio-politically only when framed by the IRA statement made at the end of the hunger strike – 'outside of a thirty-two county sovereign independent democracy, the IRA will have no involvement in what is loosely called constitutional politics' (ibid) and not to the political programme of a political party engaged in constitutional politics. Across the street from The Soldiers of Cumann na mBan mural, Sinn Féin has erected a digitally formatted mural in memory of three IRA volunteers, Sean Savage, Mairead Farrell and Dan McCann who were the victims of a state sanctioned killing by the British Special Arms Squad in Gibralter during 1988. Mairead Farrell had been imprisoned during 1976 in Armagh Women's Prison on Explosives offenses where she instigated a hunger strike to protest the revocation of the Special Category Status of prisoners to coincide with the 1981 Long Kesh hunger strike. When released from prison in 1986 she said: "I'm a socialist definitely and I'm a Republican. I believe in a united Ireland: a united socialist Ireland, definitely socialist. Capitalism provides no answer at all for our people, and I think that's the Brits' main interest in Ireland." [9] But it is not words of struggle such as these that frame the mural. Rather, the producers of the mural, Sinn Féin have chosen to depict the funeral, and yet noticeably missing is any representation of the attack on the mourners by Michael Stone the loyalist paramilitant

[9] On line at http://www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk/larkin_pubs/older/motr/motr_all.htm retrieved 15/07/10.

who killed three of the mourners. Appropriating imagery from the past, armed combatants fire a salute. The words of the Bobby Sands poem incorporated into the mural read like a grieving eulogy – the "Aged tones of Weeping". Multilayered imagery has an effect of transposing the funeral into the present with photographic reproductions of the three coffins being born through massed crowds. The event portrayed is thus not the struggle but its defeat. It becomes clear therefore that these mediations by Sinn Féin reconfigure the struggle in the minds of an audience in the present unaware of the historical specifics, in a manner which does not resonate with the aims of those remembered. It is apparently an event that has no relevance in the present other than historical interest.

Fig. 63 Republican mural - Mairead Farrell funeral

State sanctioned violence brings the personal and the political together in an acute, uncomfortable way; it brings the big public and historic events down to the level of the individual's body. The public function of the hunger strike murals emerge at this level rather than as an inseparable component of a political dimension. It is something that can be argued about, calibrating those shades of moral grey. What if torturing information out of one person could save thousands? It is at the juncture of the hunger strike murals that the control of power through art is most visibly contested. The use of death to gainsay political oppression is a radical form promoting the dissolution of meaning in order to bring down the power structure of the dominant text. In turning his own death into a weapon the hunger striker has penetrated rather than formed one of a multiplicity of discourses, as understood by Foucault, hence

providing a struggle for difference outside the repetition of self discipline. Whereas the substitution of a multiplicity of discourses/practices for the episteme developed by Foucault in his earlier *Order of Things*, (1970) allows him to escape from the problems of causation and change that attached to his notion of the episteme, nonetheless he has not developed a site for the non-discursive so that he cannot account for a struggle outside of repetition other than through a subject marked with *potentia passive.* Within the discursive the struggle is accordingly one of sapping power rather than overturning it. But the force driving the first hunger strike murals, that is the physical impact of the violence is located in the material conditions of indeterminacy and decay in which the personal anguish of death, its seeming senselessness, it's brutal end is transferred to example – that of political revolution working 'outside' the discourse and grounding separatist narratives materially in history. It forces a point out of death's pointlessness. Semantically the resonance in these murals with dying flesh and decay articulates the allegorical /deconstructed imagery of the rotting fish that emerged in the Early Bourgeois mural and underscores the barbaric nature of the ideologies of the ruling class. Fredric Jameson in *The Political Unconscious* (1981) has advanced a compelling argument that a comparative analysis will show that all nationalism is both healthy and morbid. Both progress and regress are inscribed in its genetic code from the start. Insistence on the simultaneously ideological and Utopian character of nationalism is not merely a theoretical issue. All works of class history as they have survived and been transmitted to people the various museums and traditions are all one way or the other ideological, having vested interests in and functional relationship to social formations based on violence and exploitation. But the performativity of violence with which the first murals engage is not mythical or symbolic enforcing a political or religious message and as such forming an aesthetic artefact; they unambiguously engage with the sheer physical force of violence.

However their co-option into Sinn Féin's political project of constitutional engagement transferred their agency to that of a contingent and subversive activity conducted alongside those whose struggle for power is aimed at sapping the colonial hegemony rather than achieving the revolutionary goal of expelling colonial occupation. Sinn Féin's subsequent cooperation with British Rule has anchored their meaning to a reductive signifier of the fulfilment of the master narrative of revolution. But is it a society fulfilled? Is revolutionary action not as Sartre would have it a "rising above the situation", a thrusting forward as an act of freedom, a state of permanent revolution and an expression of human subjectivity and not as a facilitator for the abstraction of ideology. For the time that they remained in the site of the non-discursive each hunger mural retained an autonomy which resisted external pressure and mapped its own territory. Mourning and rage, aggression and depression met within the most limited space, striving for reconciliation; however the nature of this meaning has since been reduced to its function of communication in reductive systems of meaning.

Charting the Miriam Daly Mural

> There is a painting by Klee called Angelus Novus. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so. His face is turned towards the past. Where *we* see the appearance of a chain of events, *he* sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so fair, to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That, which we call progress, is *this* storm.
>
> Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History* (2003, Ch. IX)

> Political activity, however professional or well intentioned, can only be fruitful if based on a correct analysis of the problem it confronts. Most people accept that the present flurry has as its objective the attainment of peace: but few have openly examined whether what is desired is the sullen quiet achieved by repression and dissimulation or creative lasting peace based on justice and understanding.
>
> Miriam Daly – the *Irish Times* 17th January 1975.

On the gable end of a row of terraced houses in Oakman Street, off the Falls Road in West Belfast, is a well known mural. Painted in August 1996, the writing — History is written by the Winner - Miriam Daly—appears above a complex image comprising the open book of Irish history, a mask labelled Revisionism and the female face of a personified Ireland, labelled Truth.[vii] Against the skyline a helicopter is seen ratcheting overhead. Miriam Daly lectured at Queens University, Belfast. She was a founding member of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) - the political wing of the Irish National

Liberation Army (INLA) - of which she became chairperson, leading the party for two years. She was murdered on the 26th June 1980 at age 51. Her body bound hand and foot and with five bullets in her head was discovered by her young daughter when she returned home from school. The Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) claimed responsibility for her death although there remains considerable doubt as to whether the murder was in fact ordered from within government circles.

What may at first glance appear formulaic in fact is a sophisticated agitprop on brick. The attack on historical revisionism and the demand for a fresh approach to Irish history based on research invokes the suppositions and presuppositions that code social and political positioning. Walter Benjamin famous announcement has drawn our attention to the conflation of violence with cultural heritage:

> ...with whom does the historical writer of historicism actually empathize. The answer is irrefutably with the victor. Those who currently rule are however the heirs of all those who have ever been victorious. Empathy with the victors thus comes to benefit the current rulers every time. ... Whoever until this day emerges victorious, marches in the triumphal procession in which today's rulers tread over those who are sprawled underfoot. The spoils are, as was ever the case, carried along in the triumphal procession. They are known as the cultural heritage ... There has never been a document of culture, which is not simultaneously one of barbarism.
>
> — Benjamin, *On the Concept of History* (2003: Ch. VII.)

Hence the mural voices an emphatic hostility with the mastering convention or by implication to be 'sprawled underfoot'. Its power is two pronged, both pragmatic and idealistic, that is to say its use as a political weapon and its vision of the ideology of the republican movement.

The use of a mural as a political weapon arises from its capacity to convey a statement without attracting disinterested contemplation. Although it contains an ideological vision, this is contingent and manifesting its own immanent temporality. Bill Rolston reports of a republican mural painter who states: "We felt that a mural shouldn't stay up very long. Once you had a certain supply of murals going, you should paint it out and do something different" (Rolston, 1992: p. iii). The Mexican mural painter and political activist David Siqueiros explained the contentious subject matter of his political murals that were destroyed, and thus the provisionality of his political art as "...more important as a means to fulfill the objectives of the movement than saving the work of art" (Siqueiros, 1975: p. 219). Its signification is thus a possibility fulfilled in the present tense even if the past is its referent. Siqueiros draws a link between a political programme and the propaganda of the art: "If political conditions do not respond to the subject matter of our murals, then we must join the workers ...and fight to achieve the right conditions

... The Siqueiros Experimental Workshop was at the service of the working class through the direct agency of the Communist Party" (Siqueiros, 1975: p. 219). The Black Panther activist and artist, Emory Douglas expresses a similar view stressing the symbiotic relationship between the party's and the paper's mission: "Without the party, the [*Black Panther*] paper wouldn't have had the same impact".[10] The party's Ten Point Program outlined an agenda that included obtaining full employment, decent housing, education, and health care, and finally "people's community control of modern technology". The Panthers' community programs, like free breakfast for children, clinics, schools and arts events were featured in the paper, representing implementation of the ten points. Most of the back-page posters directly referred to one of the ten points, illustrating tight coordination between the paper, the party and the mission. The leaders believed that *The Black Panther* was not just reporting news, but causing radical change. Like Emory's drawings, the paper was a tool for liberation, visualizing violent confrontations with perceived oppressors (ibid).

Ironically however, the programme of the political party seized with progressing republican ideology, Sinn Féin, has not matched the mural's autonomy. During her time in the IRSP, Miriam Daly was instrumental in opposing what she and others in the Republican movement in general perceived as Sinn Féin's drift towards Federalism, and its compromising of republican demands for self determination. This understanding is supported by Kevin Bean who, in his perceptive work *The New Politics of Sinn Féin* argues persuasively that the Provisional Republican Movement (The Provo's of which Sinn Féin is the political wing) transformed into a constitutional party which became an integral part of the state and institutions it was once pledged to destroy. While many commentators have mostly stressed the internal dynamic of the movement or the actions of individual elements within it to explain this transformation, for Kevin Bean such analyses are limited by their failure to situate the Provisional movement within a broader political, social and economic context. Considering the Provo's as a social movement, Bean conceptualizes their evolution as a process of 'institutionalisation' (rather than individual betrayal for example); that is the logic through which radical social movements are transformed from revolutionary instruments into participants in establishment politics and thereby become absorbed by the status quo. Bean argues that the transformation of the Provisional movement has been shaped more by its interaction with the British state, which has shaped the social and economic environment within which the movement operates rather than by processes internal to it. It was not just the political and military parameters of the Provo's campaign that the British state was able to define. British counterinsurgency strategy also had a social and economic aspect, whereby socio economic regeneration of economically deprived areas and facilities powered by the British state were appended to a specific political agenda, what Northern Ireland

[10] On line at http://bad.eserver.org/issues/2004/65/gaiter.html retrieved 05/05/09.

Office official Sir Richard Needham referred to this process as 'the third arm of the British government's strategy…the economic and social war against violence'. In Needham's words, its conscious aim was 'drawing them i.e. (republicans) into the net' and making Sinn Féin a 'part of that very different part-public, part-private partnership which was the essence of our long term solution' (Bean, 2007: pp.27-33).[viii]

O'Connor Lysaght (veteran Irish Trotskyist) has identified inconsistencies with Irish republicanism as follows:

> Time and again the 'socialistic tendency' in Irish Republicanism has come to the surface only to be used as an excuse to abandon its revolutionary perspective. It was so in the New Departure of 1879, in the emergence in turn of Fianna Fail, Clann na Poblachta, Official Sinn Fein and, now, of Provisional Sinn Fein. Why this should be so lies in the fact that Irish Republicanism's revolutionary content lies precisely in its long term alienation from the Irish state, colonial and semi-colonial, and in its claim to be a state 'virtually established' entitled and able to wage successful armed struggle against the usurping authorities. Once it recognizes the need to win effective popular support, the revolutionary illusion fades".[11]

The transformation from revolutionary praxis to conventional politics contests the use of peace as a means of disabusing Ireland of British imperial control. Peace is modified by a number of modal auxiliaries. It is thus that Miriam Daly asserted:

> The strength of the Republican Movement lies in the legitimate aspirations of the Irish people for freedom and their latent support for those who have the courage to challenge imperialist might – by force. Peace must be based on justice and must recognize objective achievements. Only collaborators and agents of the Imperial power want peace at any price. A just peace would last and lay the foundations for a great prosperous and influential Irish state.
>
> — Miriam Daly, reported in the *Irish Times*, 17th January, 1975. pp. 10/11.

The mural therefore has separated from the party political movement. It is not coded towards a peace agreement in which the republican movement would become an integral part of the institution it pledged to destroy. It does not aestheticize or provide a design for a political party, but gains a resurgent autonomy splintered in two directions. On one level the sense of inescapable victim which threatens to swamp the

[11] On line at cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/people/docs/oconnorlysaght76.htm retrieved 20/06/09.

mural (and so many of the republican murals) renders the marginalization and failure of the revolutionary party from which they have sprung. Yet it is not true of course that all tragic contents are changeable, just as carnival is wrong to believe that anything can be converted to humour. There is nothing comic about gang rape, or Auschwitz, or about torture and hunger strikes. The mode in which the sacred and profane can coexist is the mode of satire where the unspeakable is uttered in the context of therapeutic ridicule. But tragic situations are often unchangeable in at least one important respect – unchangeable for those who are the victims.

However, on another level the mural gains to itself a contingency, a possibility that revives its temporality. It thereby supplants the victim signifier which is otherwise anchored to closure and etched into the status quo. This possibility can be understood when viewed in the light of Kevin Bean's argument that not only has the Provisional military campaign to destroy Northern Ireland ended, but a distinct historical period has come to an end: "The conversion of the Provisionals from militant revolutionaries into constitutional nationalists is already passing from the realm of contemporary politics into that of history ... It is an accomplished fact for a political generation whose members are too young to remember the Troubles ... The Troubles are fading away from memory into history" (Bean, 2007: pp. 247-261). This indicates that not only has the epoch closed but that, with the defeat of republican and progressive forces, the entire history has done so. The state seems to have such a gravitational pull that any attempt to subvert or challenge it will fatally be co-opted. In contrast to those who think in terms of disintegration of the old order and revolutionary change, Bean argues that ". . . today our narratives seem to have run their course; we appear to be at the end looking back to understand, to explain and perhaps to learn from what happened" (Bean, 2007: p. 264).

But the mural rails against the conceptual retreat into diachronic linearity and determinism that is here suggested. Rather it resonates with Walter Benjamin's insight that to articulate the past does not mean to recognize it the 'way it really was'. "In every epoch," he writes in Chapter VI of *Selected Writings*, "the attempt must be made to deliver tradition anew from the conformism which is on the point of overwhelming it. The same threat hangs over both the content and the receivers: that of becoming a tool of the ruling class." (Benjamin, 2003: Ch. VI). And Karl Marx famously asserted in his *Theses on Feuerbach* that "philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point however is to change it" (Marx, 1969: Ch. XI). Changing the world involves not fatalism, but activism, a belief that revolutionaries must organize social change. It is within this belief that revolutionary art is positioned as a source of empowerment for an audience whose voice has been oppressed.

Isaac Deutscher in *The Great Purges* suggested that we should 'withdraw into a watch-tower' as Isaac Deutscher called it: "To watch with detachment and alertness this heaving chaos of a world, to be

on a sharp lookout for what is going to emerge from it, and to interpret it *sine ira et studio'* (Deutscher,1985: pp. 57-58). Deutscher's insight provides a ground for resistance to the hierarchy of power relationships which the Provo's have formed with the institutions it once pledged to destroy; this insight also provides the means to imbue the past through political action with retroactive meaning and value in the sense understood by Benjamin. The "watch tower" autonomy emerges in the mural despite all the hopes that had been placed in the achievement of a political art directly linked to revolutionary praxis having (for the moment) been dashed. That this is possible arises from the mural's contestation with and not submission to the victor 'writing history'. Historical development is to be understood not as linear evolution but as what Benjamin calls a shocking constellation of disparate epochs. This emerges in the mural through its engagement with violence (her murder), and with the transience of surveillance (the helicopter) which thus admits an unstable series of possibilities to the present realities of peace in the north of Ireland. This understanding is based on present realities and not on vague fantasies about the present. Paradoxically the present is arrested and the hypothesis of permanent revolution resonates both in the revolutionary person of Miriam Daly and, allegorically, in the female face of the personified Ireland. The mural accordingly serves to incite the revolutionary illusion which the conformist political strategies of Sinn Féin have undermined.

Fig. 64 Miriam Daly mural

Notes

[i] Under Henry VIII the 'Anglicization' of Ireland meant the large scale removal of the native peoples from their lands in order to use them for farming; this process of anglicization continued for a century mostly in the north where the land was confiscated and awarded to English and Scottish settlers. Although the northeastern-most corner of Ireland lies within sight of Scotland across the Irish Sea and people from Scotland had settled in Ireland for centuries, the 'plantation' of Ireland was done with all the force of imperialism and racism. Land was taken from those whose families had lived and worked on it for generations. The native language was forbidden, as was the practicing of Roman Catholicism. Catholic uprisings were brutally repressed by Oliver Cromwell. (Rolston, 1991: p. 69)

[ii] A detailed survey is available on line at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/landon.htm retrieved 6/07/09. Discriminatory practices are perhaps best described by Sir Basil Brooke, who served as Northern Ireland's prime minister for twenty years, who actively promoted a system of employment wherein jobs were offered through social organisations such as the Orange Order. In the *Londonderry Sentinel* (20 March 1934), Sir Brooke stated that:

> I recommend those people who are Loyalists not to employ Roman Catholics, 99 per cent of whom are disloyal; I want you to remember one point in regard to the employment of people who are disloyal....You are disenfranchising yourselves in that way....You people who are employers have the ball at your feet. If you don't act properly now before we know where we are we shall find ourselves in the minority instead of the majority.

Under representation of Catholics extended throughout most levels of Northern Ireland's government. For example gerrymandering in 1922 ensured that in the 1924 elections Catholics controlled only two out of eighty local councils, despite making up some forty percent of the population. Legislation introduced in 1922 restricted voting rights to two categories of voters which were formed to ensure Protestant dominance at the polls: (1) the 'ratepayers', primary occupiers of a household as either tenants or owners, and (2) persons who owned commercial property valued at £10 or more per year. As only two people per house were allowed to vote, the ratepayer category effectively excluded lodgers or adult children living at home. Both lodgers and adult children living at home tended to be Catholics due to their lower overall economic status and larger families; thus, Catholic franchise was restricted. People in the second category, that is, owners of commercial property, were allowed to nominate special voters for each £10 of value of their property, up to a maximum of six voters. Since over 90 per cent of the commercial property in Northern Ireland was Protestant owned, this provision expanded their voting franchise and, along with the ratepayer category, extended Unionist control over the ballot box and the government.

Discriminatory practices and legislation were found in all sections of the society, maintained by Unionist control of the government of Northern Ireland, including the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), and its paramilitary reservists, the Ulster Special Constabulary, the judiciary in which Protestants outnumbered Catholics by sixty-eight to six in 1968, employment in the public sector, housing allocations, and educational revenues, where discrimination was more often the rule than the exception. Control of the national and most local governments also gave the Unionist majority the power to determine Protestant and Catholic share of public sector benefits. The construction of public housing and hospitals has been regulated by the Unionist-controlled parliament and local councils.

In the private sector, two main categories of imbalance existed between Catholics and Protestants: the level of unemployment and the type of employment in which Catholics were employed predominantly in unskilled and lower-paying jobs, such as clothing manufacture and textiles. Protestants, on the other hand, dominated the relatively higher-paid areas of shipbuilding and engineering. In addition to discrimination in hiring practices, several other factors account for this disparity between employment in the two communities, including policies that affected the location of new industries through zoning and tax incentives and those that encouraged placement of industries in areas difficult or dangerous for Catholics to reach. In addition, trade unions often acted as employment representatives; thus, since the unions were sectarian in nature, Catholics were effectively banned from employment in many instances.

The segregation and imbalance of the educational system also affected Catholic employment opportunities. Religion and education in Northern Ireland have been linked for almost the entirety of Irish history and remain so today that has resulted in an educational system that allowed bible teaching of predominantly Protestant ethics and

the withdrawal of Catholics to religious schools that received funding equal to only 65 per cent of that given to the state-sector, Protestant-affiliated schools.

[iii] The battle took place on the 1st July, but with subsequent changes to the calendar has been celebrated in later years on the 12th July. Originally, Unionism commemorated the Battle of Aughrim on 12 July (old style Julian calendar, equivalent to 23 July new style). At Aughrim, which took place a year after the Boyne, virtually all of the Irish Catholic and old English aristocracies who had seized land from as early as 1171 and who had been dispossessed of lands to accommodate the plantations under Elizabeth I and Oliver Cromwell were wiped out. The Boyne, was treated as less important, third after Aughrim and the anniversary of the Irish Rebellion of 1640 on 23 October. Hence what was celebrated on "The Twelfth" was not William's victory over Popery at the Battle of the Boyne, but the extermination of the elite of the Catholic Irish at Aughrim thereby ending the fear of having to surrender the planted lands.

[iv] The main groups of Unionism and Loyalism are: UUP (Ulster Unionist Party); DUP (Democratic Unionist Party – an ultra-conservative traditionalist party under Rev Paisley who named "Northern Ireland" the last remaining "true Brits"); UVF (Ulster Volunteer Force – a loyalist paramilitary group) and the UDA (Ulster Defence Association – a loyalist paramilitary unit, sometimes also named the UFF (Ulster Freedom Fighters)), the LVF (Loyalist Volunteer Force); The Orangemen - A society established in 1795 to maintain Protestant ascendancy in Northern Ireland. UDR (The Ulster Defence Regiment), a part-time security force of Protestant Loyalists recruited by the British Army beginning in 1970 and renamed the Royal Irish Regiment in 1992. RUC - The Royal Ulster Constabulary, Northern Ireland's local police force. More than 90 percent of its officers were Protestants. On the other side Republicanism/Nationalism: SDLP (Social Democratic Labour Party – a moderate, middle class nationalist party); The Provos (Sinn Fein/IRA - a republican party and its paramilitary wing the Irish Republican Army); IRSP/INLA (Irish Republican Socialist Party – a Socialist-Republican party and its paramilitary wing the Irish National Liberation Army); eirigi (a newly formed Socialist Republican party).

[v] The political basis of this united front—the so-called 'five demands'—was a humanitarian and civil rights approach. Official policy spelled out under the headline *Determination and Unity,* APRN 27 October 1979, p.1, provided that 'What is needed now on the H-Block issue is a mass single-issue campaign aimed at drawing in whatever support possible -whether it be on a purely humanitarian basis...or whether it be full blooded support for the IRA's armed struggle.' The five demands were: The right not to wear prison uniforms; The right not to do prison work; The right to associate freely with other political prisoners; Restoration of the right to earn remission (early release time); The right to a weekly visit, letter, parcel; The right to organise their own educational and recreational pursuits. "We must build a united nationalist front against the British government...The five demands form a sufficient basis for unity among the nationalist grassroots of all parties in this country" declared Adams (APRN 16 May 1981. This represented a downgrading of political demands to humanitarian ones. It was the first time that the Republican movement was attempting to build a 'broad front' and to find a broader base. Importantly, militant revolutionary action was not compatible with a 'broad campaign', because it would alienate the 'broad forces' of constitutional nationalism. Pushing bodies like the Catholic Church to take a stand and back door diplomacy backed if necessary by H Block activity was the new course. Thus Chris Bambery, *Ireland's Permanent Revolution*, p. 81 cites the APRN newspaper which declared "Britain can be beaten when the Free State premier, the SDLP leader and the Catholic hierarchy are forced to apply their muscle instead of as at present playing at it."

[vi] Sinn Féin has appropriated this image of Bobby Sands. On their web page his photograph, on which the famous mural portrait is based, is placed alongside his famous words - Everyone, republican or otherwise has his/her own part to play. No part is too great or too small No one is too young or too old to do something. On line at http://www.sinnfein.org retrieved 07/02/10.

[vii] George Orwell coined the phrase 'History is written by the winners' in his essay *As I Please* in which he ironically conjoins historical 'truth' with physical victory 'In no case do you get one answer which is universally accepted because it is true: in each case you get a number of totally incompatible answers, one of which is finally adopted as the result of a physical struggle. History is written by the winners'. On line at http://hackvan.com/etext/george-orwell/george-orwell--revising-history.htm retrieved 08/04/09.

[viii] Bean rightly flags up the influence of ideological changes in international politics as a key driver in isolating and eventually altering the politics of republicanism. He points out that alongside the impact of the collapse of international anti-imperialist movements on Irish republicanism, the very notion of Enlightenment universalist values rooted in the French Revolution and the United Irishmen also declined in importance. Republican politics ceased to be about grand visions and who should run society, and instead became about the politics of cultural and communal recognition. Where once the British state enjoyed no legitimacy within republican communities in Northern Ireland, it now found itself called upon by its old adversaries to take responsibility for ensuring 'parity of esteem' and 'recognition' for both the traditional Unionist and nationalist communities. By calling for more funding and recognition for the Irish language, or for the re-routing of offensive Orange marches, the republican movement implicitly invited the British government to adjudicate and rule between two cultural groups, hence strengthening the legitimacy of British rule and changing the republican struggle from one against division into a game of one-upmanship underpinned by the politics of grievance. Bean shows how Sinn Fein's revisionism not only meant that it started to accept political divisions as natural or traditional, but started to accept the right of Britain to rule Northern Ireland. After all, if there really are 'two traditions' in Northern Ireland, distinct, different and with difficulty getting along then clearly an external adjudicator is needed to oversee their interaction.

CHAPTER FOUR

Bloody Sunday: the Murals on Rossville Street, Derry

— Iconic signs are likely to be read as natural; such signs do not draw our attention to their mediation; truth and reconciliation, death squads and the 'dirty war'; the metaphor of justice.

Civil Rights – the Battle of the Bogside

The Bombay Street Mural

— The provisionality of context; meaning is not guaranteed.

Brits Out

— Self determination; parades; political projects give way to cultural demands.

Bloody Sunday: the Murals on Rossville Street, Derry

'...illusion only is sacred, truth profane'
Feuerbach: *The Essence of Christianity*.

A mural on Rossville Street in the Bogside neighbourhood of Derry depicts events that occurred on Bloody Sunday when the British army opened fire on civil rights protestors and killed fourteen people. [1] The protest occurred in January 1972 when the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association organized a march in Derry against internment. This setting is explained in the mural with an image that shows a sizeable crowd of protestors and a megaphone placed below a banner containing the writing - Civil Rights Association. The mural which has its own cultural specificities provides a contrast between coerced somatic control and democratic politics. This contrast emerges from its dramatic imagery which is largely based on a photograph taken during the march. A group of men, led by a local catholic priest (later to become Bishop Daly) who is waving a white handkerchief, is seen carrying the body of Jack (Jackie) Duddy from the scene of the shooting. The photograph shows blood on Jack Duddy and on the handkerchief. Notably, the mural does not – an indication that emphasis is placed on grievance and democratic rights and not on the body. The intrusion of violence on this exercise of democratic rights is underscored by a banner that during the attack became bloodstained when used to cover the body of one of those killed and which is represented in the mural not as one might expect on the body of a protestor, but with a masked and armed British soldier standing on the blood spattered writing: Civil Rights.

The street is a site of intense spiritual and cultural significance famous as the focus of resistance to colonial British presence in Northern Ireland. The artists describe the murals as follows: "This is real art done by the people and for the people. That's what makes it authentic. That's what gives it meaning in a world where meaning has all but been destroyed by ambition and the greed for money. It honours our past. Our work commemorates the real price paid by a naive and innocent people for simple democratic rights."[2] This iconic characterisation which emphasises the distance the murals have travelled from the marginalization caused by the victorious ideology of economic growth does not alone however enable the murals to resonate with the Peircean notion of the iconic mode as a sign which bears the closest possible resemblance to what it stands for. Since Foucaultian theory which sees power manifesting through

[1] On 30 January 1972, 13 people were killed (seven of whom were teenagers) and another 14 people wounded, one of whom later died when soldiers from the British Parachute Regiment opened fire on the civil rights protestors. Two protesters were also injured when they were run down by army vehicles. Five of those wounded were shot in the back. The day became known as Bloody Sunday.
[2] On line at http://www.Bogsideartists.com retrieved 25/08/10.

discourse as intrinsic to the ideological structuration of a society whereby meaning is produced and mediated through the dynamics of this force, and notions of Debord whose spectacle '...depicts what society could deliver, but in so doing it rigidly separates what is possible from what is permitted' (Debord, 2009: p. 25), the uniformity of the iconic mode is susceptible to questions of practice and power. This means that the meaning of a text, the meaning arising out of discourse, the meaning that emerges from any medium, is always mediated and constructed—it is never transparent but is driven by an underlying ideology. However, the implication for the Bloody Sunday mural is that a highly evocative signifier does not draw our attention to its mediation; embedded in convention it seems to present reality more directly than symbolic signs. Daniel Chandler has noted that a highly motivated sign such as an iconic sign, is a sign informed largely through social convention (Chandler, 2007: p.38), a notion that recurs in the writings of Umberto Eco who argues that at a certain point an iconic representation appears to hold greater 'truth' than the real experience. In this way experience is transferred to convention — thereby people begin to "look at things through the glasses of iconic convention" (Eco, 1976: pp. 204/5). In this illusory state, the sign is preferred to the thing signified thus permitting imagery to mediate the growth of convention. In this section, then, I shall chart the direction that the Bloody Sunday mural takes by looking at its engagement with questions of practice and power in relation to its socio-political context.

The convention that foregrounds the Bloody Sunday mural is articulated by Tom Kelly one of the Bogside artists as '...the real price paid by a naive and innocent people for simple democratic rights' (ibid). But the march was scarcely a question of democratic grievance. Bill Rolston observes that by the time of the march a mood prevailed of insurrection against the British. "When British troops were deployed on the streets of Belfast in August 1969, it was ostensibly to protect nationalists under attack from mobs of loyalists and members of the local part-time paramilitary police force, the B Specials. At the same time, it was clear from at least the beginning of 1970 that an insurgency was brewing, leading to the conclusion that the British army was to be involved in a counter-insurgency mode in Northern Ireland" (Rolston, 2005: pp. 181-203). The mural should be compared to the polemic of early agitprop iconography such as the Resist British Rule and Brits Out posters and murals against the British army's presence. However unlike the exhortations of these early murals, this mural speaks of the victim where the injured and dead are rushed to cover; the protagonists are passive anti-heroes. Hence the imagery does not document the event; rather a moment from the event is captured and reformulated as a new contingency: one which questions the metaphor (who is the masked British gunman?). It advances a propogandistic message whereby insurgency reformulates itself as helplessness – a voice in which relational and community membership is considered to live on in a narrative sense after biological death. Unlike the kaleidoscopic opportunities for interpretation offered by allegory, meaning is fixed on the

simplistic public message. Its function is inseparable from the political dimension. But the social circulation of public imagery involves various semiotic shifts when brought under the mediating influence of political exigencies, which may also bring semiotic constraints against its circulation. Helplessness and therapy are inevitably submission to hegemony which, once won, embeds itself in the iconic imagery.

A mural (no longer extant) painted in 1987 in Springhill Avenue, Belfast serves to illustrate this point. The mural was a memorial to eight members of the IRA ambushed and killed by the Special Air Services unit (SAS) of the British army. It showed the Celtic cross shields of the four provinces of Ireland and names of the dead and figurative representations of the members wearing IRA berets and camouflage dress. The following two reports, separated by 17 years, capture the changed thinking within the republican and nationalist community in Northern Ireland. In May 1987, *An Phoblacht/Republican News* (Sinn Féin's newspaper) argued: 'Republicans do not complain about the way in which the British Forces carried out their operation. Centuries of British terror have taught us to expect it. The illegitimacy of the forces which carried out the Loughgall killings is not simply in their actions but in their very presence in our country. It has always been and always will be illegitimate and unacceptable.' Seventeen years on, in August 2004, the *Irish News* reported that relatives of one of the IRA members killed at Loughgall had a 'very useful meeting with the Police Service of Northern Ireland's (PSNI) chief constable. One member of the family commented afterwards, "We are just a family trying to get the truth about what happened to my brother". The police spokesperson described the encounter in similar terms: "It was a useful meeting with an open two-way discussion. The Kellys' (the family in question) raised a number of issues with the chief constable. He in turn offered his assessment of the decision to deploy the army against what he feared was a dangerous gang."' The defiance that characterized the republican struggle has been replaced with what Kevin Bean refers to as a therapeutic tone and a joint search for the truth as part of a process of reconciliation (Bean, 2007). The dead volunteer in question was Padraic Kelly. The Republican activist Kevin Rooney recalls: 'I remember vividly his father's tribute the day after the Loughgall ambush, when he described his son and seven comrades as 'brave Irish soldiers fighting a war against an oppressor'. At the time the Royal Ulster Constabulary (Northern Ireland's then police force) and the British Army regularly attacked IRA funerals to prevent any military displays. When asked by a TV reporter about the prospects of a clash between security forces and mourners at his son's funeral, Kelly replied: 'My son will be buried with full military honours as befitting an Irish soldier. If they try and prevent Padraic's coffin leaving the house with his IRA beret and gloves then we will bury him in the back garden!'[3] However such an open spirit of defiance is a far cry from the current dialogue centred on demands for Victims' Commissions and Truth and Reconciliation Commissions. The revisionism that the lexicon of victims,

[3] On line at www.spiked-online.com/index.php?/site/author/Kevin%20Rooney/ retrieved 20/08/10.

suffering and trauma that dominates discourse, 'securing the peace', 'bedding down and keeping the peace on track' suggests that it was the peace process itself, and not bringing an end to British rule, that had always been republicanism's goal.

Fig. 65 the Bloody Sunday mural

Fig. 66 Photographic source of the Bloody Sunday mural

Until June 2010 the Bloody Sunday mural mediated the provisionality of the annual march in Derry. Each year the catholic population of Derry crowd together in thousands under huge banners bearing the portraits of those killed. The discursivity of this gathering is driven by a specific contingency, namely to

determine who was ultimately responsible for the killing of the civil rights protesters by British paratroopers in Derry on 30 January 1972; a contingency which the mural exudes. When the British Paratroopers shot dead 14 people on Bloody Sunday British government claims of neutrality and moral authority in dealing with the escalating violence in Northern Ireland were exposed. Existing historical accounts of Bloody Sunday treat the killings as the outcome of a more-or-less unified military anxiety at increasing disorder in Derry, combined with unexpected events on the day, presenting the killings as the outcome of essentially responsive actions by the British military. In so doing they lend support to the theory that represents the killings as the outcome of a series of errors of interpretation and communication.[i] Following upon an accord arising from the Peace Agreement in 1998 the British government set up the Bloody Sunday Inquiry led by Lord Saville this supplanting the earlier Widgery Report of April 1972, the original enquiry into the killings that exonerated the British forces which had concluded that the protestors were armed.

To make generalized claims about the fairness of inquiries though is problematic as the Bloody Sunday inquiry has been mediated in very specific ways. For example the Troubles are framed as a period of sectarian violence and not as a state of war, which rules out a finding of war crime. One phenomenon which goes to the heart of state terror is the state's sponsorship or condoning of death squads. This issue is one which is particularly relevant to Northern Ireland. Rolston has convincingly argued that: 'In the course of a thirty year war against republican insurgency, the state derived a complex range of police, army and intelligence units to gather intelligence, run agents and engage in direct action which included on occasion assassination of insurgents. At the same time, loyalist paramilitary groups were also engaged in action against both the republican insurgents and the wider nationalist civilian population. Finally, there was the interface between the state forces and the pro-state paramilitaries which gave rise to collusion, whereby the state forces directed, supported and covered up for the activities of the loyalist groups '(Rolston, 2005. p. 185). The tripartite phenomenon of state death squad activity, loyalist death squads, and collusion between state agents and loyalist paramilitaries formed an overarching texture in republican murals.[ii] An example which links its imagery to these sorts of material fact is the mural in Springhill Avenue, Belfast showing automatic weapons with the writing: Sold in South Africa / Bought by M15 / Supplied to UFF/UDA Death squads.[iii] The symbolisms deployed in these murals are not decorative. Rather they are agitational in the sense that they explain a simple idea to lots of people. Thus the mural in Oakman Street with the writing End British Collusion, which shows members of the loyalist paramilitary groups standing with members of the Ulster Defence Regiment and the RUC above Republican burial crosses, a 9mm pistol held by Britain and the UDA. Screeds of official documents

scattered through the image find support in records produced by Rolston showing that collusion was well documented (ibid).

The demand for a public acknowledgment of collusion and its effects invokes the rule of law, but, as Rolston argues the rule of law went hand in hand with a dirty war of 'dubious legality': 'Ultimately the dirty war was authorised at the highest levels of the state itself in terms of the chains of command which led back to chief constables, army generals, the secret services and political rulers' (Rolston, 2005: p. 195). The appearance of constitutional legality in fact acted as an effective mask for terror. Through both dirty war activities and collusion with loyalist paramilitaries, the British state in Northern Ireland, albeit democratic, was intimately involved in terror. This cannot be dismissed as some inexplicable aberration from the rule of law. Rather dirty war and support for death squads in Northern Ireland '…represented an endemic response to political challenge by an authoritarian British state with a history of colonial oppression" (Rolston, 2005: p.198).

The Troubles reconfigured an existential specificity that originated both in the violence and in the broader text of the discursivity of the Troubles. The imagery is thus an effect in context: A mural in Beechmount Avenue shows a lampoon of John Major's address for lasting peace with Republican demands spelled out: British Troops out / End Unionist Veto / Stop Collusion / Disband RUC and RIR / POWs released / All Roads Opened / A Just and Lasting Peace. These demands are specific to the contingencies of battle. Another in Rossville Street Derry shows the figures of the British Soldier, the Policeman, the Judge and the Capitalist characterized as Occupation, Discrimination, Injustice and Exploitation respectively. The implication is that these elements are specific to the discursivity of the Troubles whose removal will resolve the conflict favourably for republicanism. But these demands were not the conflict's raison d'état; rather they articulate the counter culture argued by Bean (refer to the section on the Hunger Strike). The transcontextualized insurgency thus pivots on an ironic parody of itself, which demands an equitable exchange with its one time foe for whose system of justice it has no respect.

The inquiry is furthermore located in the postmodern structural discourse of cultural identity and difference which constructs pockets of cultural diversity (called ethnicity), thus halting the general state of provisionality and disturbance of the status quo that arises with the Bloody Sunday march by confining its contingency to the reconstruction of the catholic/Derry culture. The power invested in the imagery, which was founded on a performativity of insurgency has transferred from the political project against colonial occupation to a cultural demand - – who authorized pulling the trigger? Thus the mural's engagement with the dangerous potential of the violence of Bloody Sunday (likewise with the other murals on the Bogside in Rossville Street which depict the violence of other events in Derry – the Battle

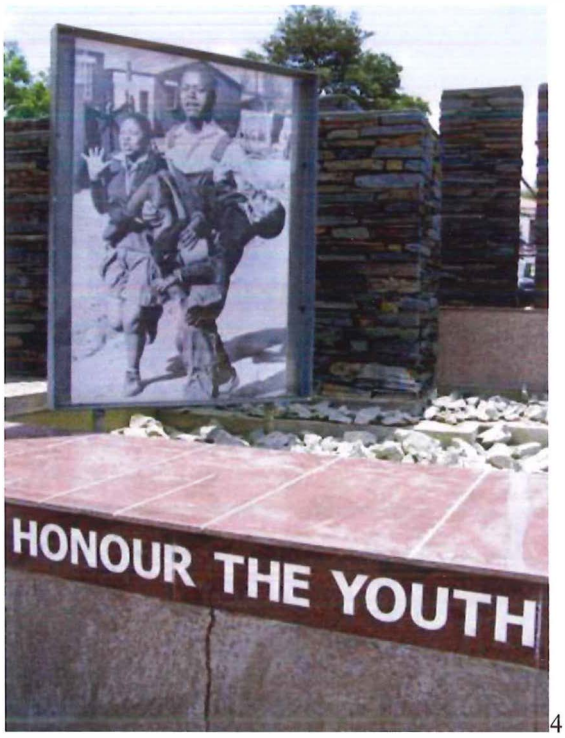
of the Bogside, Operation Motorman, The Death of Innocence – the mural showing Annette McGavigan, the 14 year old schoolgirl in her school uniform who was shot dead on the 6th September 1971 on the Streets of Derry by a British soldier, the Petrol Bomber, the Rioter resisting the British army Saracen vehicle), have been infused with the inevitability of victimhood rather than impaling the occupation on a counter narrative. The pivotal contest therefore can be seen to have shifted from replacing the system of justice to that of disrespect for the prevailing system.

The Bloody Sunday mural is thus tensed to the power politics that ultimately has undermined its agitational possibilities with the publication of the findings of the Saville Inquiry. The inquiry found that there was no conspiracy by either the British or Northern Ireland governments, or the military, to cause a confrontation with the nationalist community on the day of the shootings. Instead, it blamed the 10 minutes of chaos on 20 individual paratroopers who lost their self-control and shot civilians in the back as they tried to flee. It said they acted after a serious and widespread loss of fire discipline and that many had since knowingly put forward false accounts in order to justify their firing. The newly elected Prime Minister of Britain David Cameron provided a bureaucratic apology – by the government for the actions of its military for whom it is ultimately responsible. The applause that greeted David Cameron's apology broadcast on a giant TV screen to the crowd assembled outside the Derry Guildhall where the Inquiry report was presented to the victims' families, confirmed the success of this initiative in restoring the faith in British justice; ironically in the rule of law.

The report and its generally positive reception in Ireland and Britain suggest an event abstracted from history. The fatal shooting appears to lack antecedents – or consequences – other than the personal sufferings of the affected families. The killings seem to have no meaning beyond that of an encounter between innocent victim and evil paratroopers. The soldier's behaviour is depicted as irrational and inexplicable. Hence admission of collusion is blocked and blame of the armed forces is avoided. But Bloody Sunday was a historic event as well as an occasion of private grief. The day had begun with a march organized by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association of Derry, part of an upsurge in nationalist resistance to the British military occupation of Northern Ireland and the oppressive regime it sustained. This demand for civil rights – equal treatment in housing, employment and voting amongst other issues – had begun in earnest in 1968. But by October of that year a peaceful demonstration in Derry had been attacked by police with truncheons and water cannons. The conflict gathered momentum with the arrival of British troops in August 1969 and had intensified following a mass internment of republican suspects without trial in August of 1971. Though the Derry march was formally illegal, it drew support from 10,000 people. Conservatively portrayed as democratic politics, the march was the start of an uprising opposed to the British state.[iv] Thus the SAS (Special Air Services), the chief counter-

insurgency unit of the British army, was in operation in Belfast from 1970, although their presence was not officially acknowledged until January 1976. The British government's decision to deploy the Parachute regiment reflected the determination of the military authorities to clamp down forcibly on militant nationalists. The resulting killings on Bloody Sunday succeeded only in provoking an influx of recruits to the Provisional IRA and hardening resistance to the British state in Northern Ireland.

By way of contrast a mural that addresses the issue of state violence against innocents emerged in the South African context after the fall of apartheid. The mural, an enlarged black and white photograph shows two children one of whom is carrying a third but dead child away from the killing which occurred during the 1986 uprising. Its somatic performativity is moralized with the message 'Honour the Youth'. Aside from the figures, the dramatic stage of the insurgency is absent. The message is transitional in the sense that it points away from the past to a raised level of consciousness. But the Bloody Sunday mural is transfixed on past events; its historicism does not allow it to stand on its own and engage with the past. Its conformism rests thus on political tactics.



[4]

Fig. 67 Honour the Youth mural.

[4] The image is available on line at http://kasamaproject.org/2010/09/11/from-nepali-maoists-a-critique-of-negotiated-betrayal-in-south-africa retrieved 10/09/10

The Bloody Sunday mural and the Honour the Youth mural provide striking iconographic and stylistic contrasts. Bloody Sunday is a figurative representation of people known to the community - its complex components intended no doubt to capture the imagination and alter society (as we have seen by redressing the unfinished business of Bloody Sunday). Its representational aesthetics act as a mediator between reality and memory. But this mediation is eliminated in the Honour the Youth mural in which the act of violence coincides with its documentation. Its subversive aesthetics depict real people whose identity has never been confirmed; this anonymity of actual bodies is intended to be accepted as 'real' as being 'true' thus iconophilic revealing the vulnerable, desiring bodies of all youth. We know that the loss of life is documented by this image. This reinforces belief in the image and attempts to move the image beyond any criticism of representation. But we must differentiate between its empirical truth and its empirical use as an image – which carries a symbolic value in the process of post apartheid reconciliation. South African Albie Sachs, political activist and victim of a state terrorist murder attempt who is now a judge of the South African Constitutional Court put it this way: 'I can't separate my humanity and understanding from your humanity and understanding. I am a person because you are a person – we are individuals whose richness is from acknowledging others as people.'[5] This resonates with the eugenic marginalization embedded in apartheid and underscores the ideology driving the Honour the Youth mural. It is the mediated attempt to re-establish 'humanity' in the face of violence which provides a bridge to the Bloody Sunday mural irrespective of the iconographic and stylistic differences.

But the political strategies which frame Bloody Sunday have not yet fully resolved. Unlike the South African experience there remains some doubt whether the Troubles have ended. The focus on Bloody Sunday does not result from increased demands from the victim's families, human rights groups and the Irish government for a new inquiry, or as an automatic response to the end of the conflict of the Troubles. Rather it is fair to say that the apology which resonates with notions of admission and narrative, will bolster the Irish peace process and further an attempt to reach the all-elusive 'reconciliation' in Northern Ireland. In his essay, "On Forgiveness," Derrida discusses the paradox of granting forgiveness: true forgiveness consists of forgiving the unforgivable. Both forgiveness and reconciliation are concepts that have secular and religious interpretations. Although there is a trend towards an attempted liberalization and secularization of reconciliation discourse, the theological undertones of reconciliation continue to play an important role in the way in which reconciliation takes place. As Derrida illustrates, Archbishop Desmond Tutu's role as Chair of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission undoubtedly influenced the public's perception of reconciliation in relation to forgiveness. The tensions between religious and secular conceptions of reconciliation also foreground the roles of individuals in

[5] On line at http://www.culturenorthernireland.org/article.aspx?art_id=2692 retrieved 10/03/2010.

comparison to those of the collective. Secular ideas of reconciliation tend to emphasize tolerance on the individual level and see amnesty on the collective level as a valid way to proceed. Religious conceptions of reconciliation, however, emphasize the idea of forgiveness and national healing. Derrida argues that the concept of forgiveness is misplaced when used in relation to a national trauma. For example, he writes that "forgiveness must engage two singularities: the guilty (the 'perpetrator' as they say in South Africa) and the victim" (Derrida, 2001: p. 42). If a third party steps in to mediate this process (such as a national truth commission or juridical entity such as the Saville Inquiry), pure forgiveness is no longer possible. Forgiveness then stays in the domain of the individual, not the state. And once the process of reconciliation has begun, pure forgiveness is no longer possible. Because once one embarks on a process of understanding the 'Other', the guilty, the perpetrator, the irreducibility and incomprehensibility of the 'Other' is shattered. For Derrida, pure forgiveness "must plunge, but lucidly, into the night of the unintelligible" (Derrida, 2001: p. 49). Because reconciliation works to make sense of this unintelligibility, it drives one away from forgiveness.

These problematics characterize the discursivity of the Bloody Sunday mural. Forgiveness (the apology trades amnesty for truth and sidesteps the cause of conflict), postmodern identity politics, have subsumed the mural's interaction with state terrorism in the signifier of the fairness of British justice; and constructed it with a new convention – the power that bespeaks reconciliation. This is not the undeconstuctable justice envisaged by Derrida — the ideal after which the rules aspire — but the investment of a different type of power in the murals of the Bogside Peoples Gallery. The variables of terror and death, the physical impact of violence, remain unexamined. Also unexamined is the cause of the insurgency, a counter-narrative opposed to imperial occupation. However the sheer physical force of violence has been occluded with the inquiry finding so that the metaphorizing attributed to the events leads to them being seen as simply another form of textuality - thereby transferring contestation with British presence to its endorsement.

Civil Rights – the Battle of the Bogside

The so called 'Bogside Artists', Kevin Hasson and brothers Tom and William Kelly have painted twelve technically accomplished murals in the Bogside area of Derry. [v] The site is one of particular significance as the focus of resistance when the catholic/nationalist people of Derry clashed with armed forces during such struggles as the Battle of the Bogside, Bloody Sunday and the civil rights march: confrontations which precipitated the return of the Troubles. The murals are located along Rossville Street adjacent to the Free Derry wall, which proclaims You ~~A~~re Now Entering Free Derry. In addition to the murals the artists have painted the homes on Rossville Street in colours and tones which blend with those used in the murals on their terraced ends. The artists describe the entire street as a 'Peoples Gallery'[6] which rightly suggests that the context invites a contemplative performativity. The iconophilic gesture of the murals which centres on these significant past events provides the 'gallery' with commemorative material. However, the murals are not solely a source for commemorative ritual. While the mix of iconography and context assumes a specific interpretive catholic/nationalist community, and accordingly has its own temporal contingency, problematics of connection arise between the representational iconography and the materiality of the depicted events. For example the artists explain that the imagery is largely extracted from photographic sources, the murals thus being "... the most authentic renditions possible of the events depicted" (ibid). One might ask in that case why the photographs have not been enlarged and fixed to the walls. But the replication of the photograph's facticity positioned in a narrative series in the contextuality of the actual street where the events occurred suggests that the murals are intended to provide more than mere documentary evidence: rather the murals re-enact the events and thus provide an interaction between symbolic forms and real bodies. Tom Kelly describes the physical immediacy that the audience will experience when he cites Bishop Desmond Tutu: "A wound must be cleaned out and examined before it will heal. It is the unexamined wound which festers and finally poisons . . . Our work shows the wounds" (ibid). But aside from notions of forgiveness and reconciliation which problemetize this interpretation, the iconophilic permanence gestured by these murals is irreconcilable with the performativity of the events represented.

One of the murals represents the civil rights march. It shows Bernadette Devlin McAliskey calling through a megaphone; behind her, a temporary barricade and protestors in a cloud of tear gas unable to move forward against the backdrop of the Free Derry wall. The march is famous as a focus of

[6] On line at http://www.Bogsideartists.com retrieved 25/08/10.

democratic demands when the catholic community of Derry marched against discriminatory laws related to housing, employment and electoral practices in the city, a confrontation which precipitated police action. The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) blocked the route of the march and baton charged the crowd. The scenes were recorded by television cameras and the subsequent news coverage sparked rioting in Derry[7]. The monthly newspaper of the Republican movement *Saoirse32* put it this way: 'One student on that march became an icon of rebellion, Bernadette Devlin McAliskey. Castro in a miniskirt, they called her, 'A blazing star' and 'an icon of the civil rights movement', the female face of the Troubles in Northern Ireland; the Republican rebel immortalized in the huge mural on the gable side of a house in the Bogside of 'Free Derry'. Tourists go to see it: 'wee, wild Bernadette Devlin McAliskey' shouting through a loudhailer as smoke billows over the barricade behind her'.[8]

Fig. 68 Bernadette McAliskey mural

Speaking to The Sunday Independent forty years on from the march her discussion offers a revealing contrast between the illusory facility of an iconic image and the physical world:

[7] On line at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/derry/sum.htm retrieved 25/08/10.
[8] On line at http://irelandsown.net/bernadettedev5.html retrieved 25/08/09.

> The march in Derry on 5 October 1968 was the beginning of it all. I can still see, in my mind, the absolute hatred on the faces of police officers. My understanding of the society I was in was irrevocably changed. Until then I thought of policemen as the ones who kept the rowdy drinkers in line at my grandmother's pub. Newspaper reports described a baton charge by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). This wasn't a baton charge, this was a pent-up hatred. This was naked violence. This was three or four men with long cudgels standing over someone on the ground and hitting and hitting them. This was police following those who had dragged away the injured, and beating them up as well. This was a realization that your worst enemy was in a uniform and had the power to kill you. I hate them. Hate the police. It's not personal. But it is my deepest prejudice. By the time Bloody Sunday happened - that was when the civil rights movement ended and the armed struggle began. That was the point of realization for me that the penalty for demanding equal rights in your society was that your government would kill you. Then you say if it's OK for the government to declare war on the people, the people have a right to declare war on the government. Right up until that point I would have openly argued all the time against armed defence, never mind armed warfare. You couldn't do that with any credibility after Bloody Sunday. I never said, don't do it because I had made that equation in my own head. That's terrible but that was real.
>
> — http://irelandsown.net/bernadettedev5.html retrieved 25/08/09

Noticeably absent from the mural is any rendition of the police hatred, the police violence or the uprising that she describes. Rather, its clichéd format renders it transportable – and susceptible to reverse interpretation. Thus the gallery in general and this mural in particular is characterized by the voyeurism of the snapshot rather than by 'authentic rendition.' Its display in any gallery as prototype of civilian protest under siege is conceivable; just as it may act as prototype of civilian disorder and terrorism.

She is not drawn to her idealized representation as hero warrior or to reinforcing the iconophilic seduction of the image whose elevation of semiotic ideology threatens to dematerialize her. [vi] She states: "The icon was never me. People say the image has been tarnished. Do I care? I never made the image; I don't care what happens to it. I've got my life to live." She recognizes the discontinuity between past events and present discourses articulated through Derrida and Benjamin when, discussing an announcement at the Cannes film festival in 2008 of a proposed biographical film about her she protested: "…How dare anybody make a pretend life for me while I'm still living the real one?" (ibid). Meaning as self identical and immediately present of which she speaks, serves to show that so called first principles or

'meanings' such as freedom, democracy and family are the products rather than the foundation of systems of meaning. In doing so she references the suppositions and presuppositions articulated through Derrida:

> To mark a date in history" presupposes, in any case, that "something" comes or happens for the first and last time, "something" that we do not yet really know how to identify, determine, recognize, or analyze but that should remain from here on in unforgettable: an ineffaceable event in the shared archive of a universal calendar, that is, a supposedly universal calendar, for these are— and I want to insist on this at the outset only suppositions and presuppositions. Unrefined and dogmatic, or else carefully considered, organized, calculated, strategic—or all of these at once.
> — (Derrida in conversation in Borradori, 2003: pp. 85-102)

She clearly perceives that persistent commemorations of the arbitrary signifiers (she avoided marking the 40th anniversary of the civil rights march) located in the past delivers the reductive outcome of ideological power, a result of the failure to rematerialize semiotic analysis, that is to say the arbitrary, instrumental sign which consummates the unhinging of speech from material practice (W. Benjamin). She echoes Jean Genet: "every man is worth every other, and myself like all the others" (Genet, 1989: p.39), which as Simon Critchley (1999: p. 37) suggests is a conception of love as the recognition of alterity and revolutionary solidarity, when she says that she does not care for the image. This anticipates that language and cultural performances are a way of manipulating or masking the power that is exercised on real bodies ('I've got my life to live'). Hence the cultural demands ('our work shows the wound') underpinning the mural showing her in the Bogside with a megaphone suppress the political project that is its referent ('If it's OK for the government to declare war on the people, the people have a right to declare war on the government... This was a realization that your worst enemy was in a uniform and had the power... to kill you'.) It is worth questioning whether there is any reality outside the performance of self - that is, avoiding the process whereby one crosses the threshold of one's own personal 'screen' to become forever fixed in mythical form (Genet). How could this reality be defined? The evasive paradox of meaning that is generated through what is absent or marginal (in Derrida's usage) suggests that the aim is no longer to exalt the image but move towards its erasure.

The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association has erected a stone memorial in a paved garden to the victims of Bloody Sunday in the vicinity of the mural. A dove is engraved in the obelisk with the writing—Their epitaph is the continuing struggle for democracy—and at the base of the obelisk below a list of the 14 deceased and their ages ranging from 17 to 59 the writing —Who were murdered by British paratroopers on Bloody Sunday 30th January 1972. The memorial read with the content of the mural

narrativizes the past; but the referent (the real body) is arbitrary ('How dare anybody make a pretend life for me while I'm still living the real one'). The signifier is thus located in the past and is available in the present only as a two dimensional illusion and memory. The search for authenticity, the facticity of the replicated photograph, has been undermined by interpretation - a process which marks the potential fixing of the signified to convention. This is a mode of mythification of real bodies.

In contrast with the Peoples Gallery, a small and obscurely placed plaque on the rear of a tavern wall off Rossville Street shows a photographic portrait of Manus Deery a young boy of fifteen with the following humble tribute—In proud and loving memory of Manus Deery murdered on this spot by the British Army on the 19th May 1972. This moving tribute when read alone is a singularly effective indictment, an iconoclastic gesture. It bears comparison with a mural no longer extant which was painted in the same Rossville Street in 1982 shortly after the event it depicted, namely the killing of Stephen McConomy which contained the writing alongside his portrait—They call the killing of Stephen McConomy civil order. In this mural the immediacy of Stephen McConomy's eleven year old body invoked a performativity of justice.

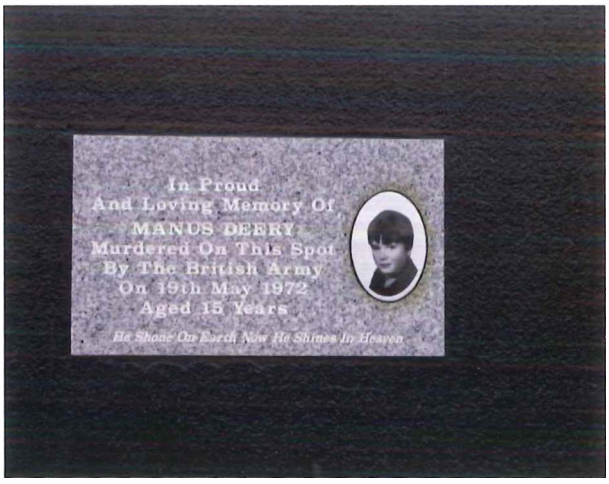


Fig. 69 Manus Deery plaque

However, when conjoined with the recognition of mortality that is metaphorized from decay by the solid stone memorial in Rossville Street and reinforced by the belief in the mural image, by the iconophilic desire, the tribute to Manus Deery is absorbed into a homogeneous metonym that articulates an historical empathy which would try to protect the past into the present.

This metonymy results in a failure to interrogate the causes of the conflict (in particular the role of pro state paramilitaries and the RUC and the sanction provided to them) and serves through a process

of reversal to perpetuate the sectarian division against which the civil rights protest was opposed. That is to say that the wound may have been exposed but a remedy (new meaning) has not been produced.

The Bombay Street Mural

A mural painted on the gable end of the rebuilt terraced estate in Bombay Street, Belfast explores the violence that occurred in the street and surrounding areas during August 1969. Bright red and angry flames leap from burning homes; a woman holds a child to her bosom; figures are shown in silhouette. A photograph of the innocent face of a young boy Gerald McCauley is shown in an oval frame with the writing alongside—Dedicated to the memory of Fianna Gerald McCauley. Below, in the format of a film strip, reproduced photographs show burned out homes, grey building rubble and a deserted street. These images contrast sharply with the red and orange flames and provide narrativized access to the aftermath of the violence. Above the scene are the words in bold—Bombay Street Never Again.

Fig. 70 Bombay Street mural

On Belfast's map, Bombay Street is a site of particularly intense spiritual and cultural significance, recognized as a site which embodies whole histories of conflict in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The street

is a narrow terrace of small millworkers' homes located alongside the tower of a Redemptorist monastery set right in the heart of the catholic Clonard district of West Belfast. It is situated at the very axis of contestation between the catholic/nationalist Falls Road and the protestant/loyalist Shankill Road, two of the largest of Belfast's many divided working class areas and the scene over the previous century or so of intermittent and often vicious sectarian violence. During August 1969, growing tension and violence that had spread from Derry to Belfast spilled onto the streets of Clonard. In the afternoon of 15th August 1969, loyalist paramilitaries from the Shankill area surged through the district determined to burn down the monastery and much of the surrounding area. There was a widely held conviction among the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force [UVF] Loyalists that suspected gunmen of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the past had used the monastery's spires as a sniper's platform from which to shoot and kill people in the Shankill at will. There was hand-to-hand fighting, petrol bombs were tossed into catholic homes; shots rang out and a fifteen-year-old boy, Gerald McAuley, fell fatally wounded. A member of the IRA's youth wing, the Fianna, he was the first Republican activist to be killed in what would soon become known as the Troubles. There was minimal resistance though from Clonard's traditional defenders, the IRA. The loyalist paramilitary had virtually a free hand and soon Bombay Street was on fire from one end to the other. By the next morning all that was left was a series of charred, blackened shells.[vii] The events in Bombay Street emerged as a pivotal moment in the violent conflict euphemistically called the Troubles,[viii] precipitating the re-appearance of the insurgency for self determination that had been articulated by early exponents such as the socialist revolutionary, James Connolly early in the 20th Century but which at the time in 1969 was not an even issue. Catholics were demanding to be equal British citizens and the IRA was an insignificant part of the political equation.[ix]

The mural is intertwined with both the Clonard Martyrs Memorial garden located below the mural and the annual parade during August of the The Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) in recollection of the events of 15th August 1969. The word 'Hibernia' comes from the old Roman name for Ireland.The entrance to the memorial is flagged by the Irish Tricolour which flies at half mast supported on either side by black flags (which in certain areas have come to commemorate the death of someone killed by the British army and are hence politicized) bearing the orange white and green Clonard crest. Entrance to the memorial is through black iron gates bearing a black and red phoenix, emblems of the Easter uprising of 1916 led by James Connolly. The garden is divided into three bricked yards.[x] The Celtic cross and the shield of the four provinces of all Ireland are evident.

However, the anchorage to closure which would arguably reduce the mixture of the imagery, the memorial garden and the procession to a commemoration is undermined by the provisionality of this context in which the conflictual structure of these performances follows the axis between self

determination and imperial control; this is reflected in the polarization of the two main protagonists; the pro Republican on the Bombay Street side and the pro UK on the Shankill side. The rear wall of the memorial is in fact the lower part of a "peace wall" separating Bombay Street from the Shankill. The brick wall of some three metres has been extended upwards firstly with iron sheeting and above that with hurricane fencing, to a massive height of some 8 to 10 meters. The estate backs up to the wall; metal fencing which acts as a protection against petrol bombs and the like which are thrown over the wall every so often protect the small yards (perhaps three meters deep) at the rear of the homes. Parts of the front end of the wall show signs of explosions having occurred. The huge wall blocks off the view on the Shankill side where graffiti has been smeared on walls facing the Clonard: 'Ulster Freedom Fighters. 'We will never be second class citizens to you scummy bastards.'

Fig. 71 Bombay Street – mural/peace line/ memorial.

One is struck forcibly by the discovery of the mural in the place where the event occurred. The collage of signifiers suggests that the subject is not historical. For example the illusionary painting is implicated in the documentary 'evidence' of the photographs; but these elements also contrast with one another because the medium of representation has materialized at a different time to the act of photographing. In this way the past is expressed in the present tense. This means that what makes the mural a principal model for the reading of the Troubles is not its deployment of specifics but the way it moves beyond the binary

Saussurean concept of signification to propose a more complex play of semiotic engagement. And that engagement is tensed to the dangerous contingencies of Belfast's history.

A brief intertext here is important. In the first place what is terror? What distinguishes it from fear, anxiety and panic? And how does a terror that is organized, provoked, differ from that fear that an entire tradition from Hobbes to Benjamin holds to be the condition of the political and the state? In *Leviathan*, Hobbes speaks not only of fear but of terror (Hobbs, 1968: 11: 27). Benjamin in the *Critique of Violence* (Benjamin, 1978: pp. 277-300) speaks of how the state tends to appropriate for itself, and precisely through threat, a monopoly on violence. But of course terrorism as a definition is affected by strategies and relations of force. The dominant power is the one that manages to impose, and thus to legitimate and legalize the terminology and interpretations that best suit it in a given situation. Derrida has pointed out in dialogue with Giovanna Borradori (Borradori, 2003: pp107/8) that terrorist acts try to produce psychic and symbolic or symptomatic reactions that might take numerous detours. The virtuality of possibility, risk or a threat features predominantly in the ability of terrorism as a strategy of war to produce a fear of what might be, inflamed by media stories that extrapolate all the angles on such possible events, even when these reported possibilities far exceed terrorist groups' actual military achievement. Importantly the quality or intensity of the emotions provoked is not always proportionate to the number of victims or the amount of damage. These observations may be carried over to Northern Ireland for example where rumour very often exaggerated the number of IRA combatants.

It can thus be seen that the contingencies, the possibilities of violence explode the ideality of the Bombay Street commemoration; the mural is thus a matter of charting possibilities, the 'fear of what might be'. And if the city's cartography manifests its own immanent and dangerous temporality, then the present tense of the mural becomes modified by 'ifs' and 'maybes', and its subjunctivity, its possibility, becomes real. [9] Thus contemplating the mural a barrage of supplementaries emerges: The absence of any obvious attacking paramilitant invokes this dread of the unknown. But there is possibly a vague glimpse of one attacker ...the others, would-be or has-been or may-be attacking loyalists are possibly the spectators...or are the spectators helpless victims; some are looking down Bombay Street at what is happening or what might happen next, some might be talking of other things. Only one victim in a photograph frame – one victim might be enough, are there more – a woman holding a child she might be a spectator or might be a resident or she may serve only as an aesthetic device to provide a lens, the selected viewpoint for the voyeur to spy on the horror. Zeugma effectively captures the mural's mosaic of what is happening and what might happen next.

[9] I am using 'subjunctivity' in the more general sense of denoting 'contingency', 'potential', as well as a degree of realism or probability of an artistic work.

With political mediation semiotic shifts of an apparently unchanging image generate new meanings. For example, the British state covertly encouraged propaganda in film, television and novels as a counterpoise to the contingencies and possibilities of the Bombay Street mural and other similarly situated murals to suggest that violence is part of the essential character of the Irish. In this way republican mural paintings became a key signifier of the threat of republican violence; to stand in for the unseen gunmen themselves who were depicted as a product of the decaying urban fabric and who, being representative of it, were quite unable to offer solutions to bring about cessation of the conflict. Neil Jarman points out that the paintings were also used to redefine the working-class estates as ghettos, a term which helped to frame the context of the violence as other and distant from British political life (Jarman, 1996: pp. 39-61). The political intrusion however does more than merely denigrate the republican protagonists; it opposes the mural in the wider sense of its possibility, its potential as a source of interrogation of the dominant culture of Britishness and unionism for the sake of those elements which could become part of a counter-tradition. Kevin Bean (Bean, 2007: p. 158) points out that the conflict between the politics of difference and the politics of universalism is fully reflected in the public and political sphere in Northern Ireland. Conflicting identities are widely perceived to be the central dynamics of political and cultural conflict in the region, subsuming and marginalizing other explanations rooted in universal categories such as class. As the dominant power in the region, the British state's framing discourse stresses the fundamental duality of the conflict, and emphasizes that political structures should ensure equality between the two traditions. It is this understanding that shapes the public sphere, rather than the aim of constructing an alternative political space to the particularized structures of republicanism and unionism. He states: "Attempts at political settlement since the 1970's have been rooted in these politics of difference, and have been designed to manage rather than resolve conflict" (Bean, 2007: pp. 158-159). He notes that the Good Friday Agreement bestowed equal legitimacy on two fundamentally conflicting republican and unionist aspirations, reflecting not " simply a skilful piece of political legerdemain but also the absorption of political discourse into a cultural framework (Bean, 2007: p. 159). Hence it does not surprise that the peace agreement of 1998, as Jarman cogently argues, has produced a blueprint for the structures of a future government and governance of Northern Ireland but has '...carefully avoided those issues that underpin the fundamentalism of the two main ethnic communities and (hence has) help(ed) to sustain the sectarian division'(Jarman, 2003: p. 21). The wider issue of acknowledging the importance of cultural, ritual and symbolic events and processes within the construction and maintenance of ethnic identities is seen as a subsidiary and minor issue. He suggests that these remain key issues if the Northern Irish society is to move beyond "ethnic division, competition and fear." Jarman's propositions illustrate Walter Benjamin's critical hermeneutical approach whereby the

concept of a present which is not in a transition but in which time stands still and has come to a stop, makes possible that way of dealing with the past in which it is 'redeemed' in so far as it knowingly contributes to the solution of the problems of the present. In the context of the peace agreement, this mural and the provisionality of its context evidence this failure.

Fig. 72. Peace line – Bombay Street (1).

Fig. 73. Peace line – Bombay Street (2).

Fig. 74 Clonard Martyrs Memorial Garden

Brits Out

> He (David Cameron) did find time to talk about Northern Ireland and pledged to fight the increasing threat from dissident republicans using every means at his disposal. And he said England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were weaker apart and stronger together."So together is the way we must always stay," said the prime minister. It was a ringing endorsement for the unionist position. The Northern Ireland Secretary of State Owen Paterson will also get strong support for the comments that he opposed those trying to rewrite history and putting brave police and soldiers on equal footing with those who sought democracy. The words of Mr Cameron and Mr Paterson will have sounded like music to the ears of unionists.
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> Editorial: *The Newsletter* 7 October 2010

A republican mural painted in 1981 depicted a morphed Margaret Thatcher whose lumpish body is formed by the shape of the British state clutching Ireland in her mouth and shaking it. The text alongside

this grotesque lampoon in bold black letters reads: Get the Brits Out! This demand was repeated in a number of murals during the Troubles. For example the mural that shows the morphed Britain this time wearing a military helmet beating the young Ireland with a baton contains the writing—Troops Out Now— and on a placard held by Ireland, the writing—Self Determination. A mural painted in 1994 with graphic and narrative understanding depicts British soldiers leaving Ireland with the writing in Irish—Slan Abhaile (safe home) above the words 25 Years Time To Go. Yet more agitational polemic shows the prototype 'rubbish man' discarding rubbish in a bin marked Brits Out above the words: Keep Eire Tidy.

Fig. 75 Get the Brits Out mural.

As part of his foundational analysis of colonial discourse and the emergence of inappropriate colonial subjects, Homi Bhabha might have been writing precisely of the murals of Northern Ireland when he observed: "The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition" (Bhabha, 1994: p. 3). Of course the community of Northern Ireland represented by its unionist and loyalist factions does not emerge as an inappropriate colonial subject when images of the Queen, the Union Jack, and King Billy appear on the walls; however the contested axis of self determination with the remainder of the community produces a binary segregation resulting exactly in classifications of pre given ethnic or cultural traits. These tensions are reflected in many of the Northern Ireland murals. For example a republican mural on the gable end of a housing estate in Armagh county concerned with a tradition of Irish nationalism that depicts the mythical Irish hero Cuchulain and the four provinces of Ireland landscaped in bold fields of the Irish tricolour flag, orange, hills of green and sky of blue and white with the writing —Mise Éire mór mo gloir (I am Ireland

great is my Glory)—is not regarded by its loyalist/unionist opponents as an affirmation of national identity with which they are able to identify but rather is treated as an unwanted ethnicity. A large loyalist mural on the gable end of a housing estate showing two armed and camouflaged paramilitary combatants pointing their automatic weapons at the spectator below the words— Prepared for Peace Ready for War— makes it very clear that notions of an Irish republic founded on such cultural traits are unwanted. But seeking self determination in a nation state independent to Britain, republican rejoinder is not concerned with possible binary classifications of the loyalist/unionist community as an ethnic Other tied to 'a tablet of British tradition' but only with its political complicity with Britain which it understands as being an opaque production of colonial oppression and impediment to independence for the whole of the community. It thus levels its polemic at this complicity in many murals, for example the writing— End British Collusion (between the Royal Ulster Constabulary [RUC] and the British army) is spread out above gravestones, army personnel, an RUC unit and a hand protruding from a union jack sleeve pointing a gun towards a women mourner and spent shells scattered over the graves. The signifiers of gun, death and political dirty wars are what Bhabha might call a "right to signify from the periphery of authorized power and privilege which does not depend on tradition" (Bhabha, 1994: p. 2).

Fig. 76 Republican mural – Collusion / It's Not an Illusion.

British colonialism in Ireland reaches back a thousand years, sometimes referred to as 'British occupation'. However, the expression 'British occupation' lacks precision. For Republicans rather than "British occupation" it is more accurate to talk of "British state denial of self-determination to the people

of Ireland"; this description raises the democratic content (or not) of the opposition to the denial of self determination. This description also draws attention to the splits within the collective body of minority groups that confines the struggles for power to those occurring between them. Rhetoric along the lines: who's saying what, who's representing who? What is a community anyway is a productive ambivalence of colonial discourse, what Bhabha calls "an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (Bhabha, 1994: p. 67). An Irish socialist republican explained:

> The British state - an external power unaccountable to Irish democracy - imposes the parameters of self determination –that is the so-called principle of consent. Hence "Brits Out" is not a demand like "Niggers out" or "Pakis go home" but means self-determination without external impediment. In Ireland, British rule has always been based on the denial of democracy and consent. It is not that republicanism disregards the issue of unionist consent to future political arrangements; where it differs with other political forces like constitutional nationalism is that it refuses unionist consent to be a prerequisite for constitutional change. While arguing that it is undesirable to coerce a 'minority,' republicanism contends that to give a guarantee to a 'minority' in advance against all coercion is to put a premium on unreasonableness and to make a settlement impossible. And this is why the British state must make a declaration of intent to withdraw, because as long as it gives unconditional guarantees to the majority in the North, the unionists will have no incentives to examine other options. So the two core reasons why the British state should be opposed are that one it denies self determination and therefore democracy and second makes peace very difficult because of unconditional guarantees to unionism.[10]

The effect of colonial discourse is seen in the production of murals in the Bogside area of Derry. One of the murals depicts a gaunt and starving Raymond McCartney [11] who was on hunger strike for 53 days during the first hunger strike of 1980 protesting the Special Category Status categorizing political protest for British expulsion from Ireland as criminal, and who is alive to this day. The figurative representation of McCartney, which is drawn from his photograph taken during the hunger strike, is validated by illustrative content – blanket, prison cell and a comparative depiction of his appearance prior to the strike.

[10] In conversation with the author during 2008.

[11] McCartney took part in the civil rights march (Bloody Sunday). He later joined the IRA. He was involved in the 1980 blanket and dirty protests and hunger strike along with fellow IRA and INLA members. In 1977 he was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of a British detective but this conviction was quashed in 2002 following a review by the Criminal Investigations Commission.

Fig. 77 Raymond McCartney mural

In November 2005, Walter Momper, president of the Berlin State Parliament, cancelled a planned exhibition of the Bogside murals in the German parliament building. The reason he advanced was that "An essential consideration of this decision is that the exhibits chosen by you (Bogside artists) presents the conflict in Northern Ireland from one particular political perspective. Such partiality from the point of view of the artists is completely legitimate but cannot be sponsored under the auspices of the highest constitutional organ of the state of Berlin." [12] From this point of view, the decision to cancel the exhibition is based on the duty of the public body to be non-political and for the artists to openly take up political themes was unacceptable. Interestingly the artists did not affirm the political propaganda content of their murals, but rather responded saying that the exhibition was indeed non-political.

> Our exhibition comprised ten large photos of our murals showing 30 years of dire struggle for democratic freedom. It is non-sectarian, non-partisan. It espouses no political viewpoint. It is a record of events that have impacted the minds of people in Derry and elsewhere. It is commemorative art. It is moreover and, perhaps more importantly, an exercise of the right to free expression.[13]

[12] On line at http://www.bogsideartists.com/newsletter/Momper.PDF retrieved 03/03/09.
[13] On line at http://www.bogsideartists.com/newsletter/Momper.PDF retrieved 03/03/09.

This notion of their work as commemorative narrative outside social discourse—"a human document rather than a political propaganda exercise ... they tell a story pure and simple" [14] centres the focus of this debate on two issues. On one level the artists reduced the dispute to the bourgeois ideal of freedom of expression; the contestation was pivoted on Walter Mompou's conservative approach to his duty as the public caretaker of the arts, and not on a collision between notions of detachment versus commitment in art. Be that as it may, what I want to deal with here is the second issue that emerges from the debate. By characterizing their work as non political, the artists have removed the murals from the axis of contestation with loyalism. And in doing so they have narrativized the murals within the context of a non perilous empirical, criminal investigation that shows concrete, empirical incidents. The Raymond Mc Cartney mural is accordingly showcased in the following terms: "Raymond McCartney's face is emblazoned on many peoples minds to this day because his photograph smuggled out of 'the Maze' seemed to tell the whole story of the grief and suffering of the inmates. Being from Derry we felt this photograph would be the ideal focus of our mural. Also being still alive he could act as the voice of authority for the period."[15]

This means that the mural is a form of document art that recalls the past as a social cause. But it is also a paradox object—it is simultaneously both an image and a critique of the image. This is a critique of the image as a source of engagement with the political demands of the Troubles. Foucault writes that art is linked to knowledge as a meta-episteme by which it is able to mimic and inscribe order merely by following its recognized form. This means that it is able to articulate the limits of the discourse. The McCartney mural can thus be seen to mimic the vulnerability of the community that owns it and to inscribe a social category of exclusion. It also places McCartney's prison at the centre of the community – which in the manner of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, is as Foucault says a "carceral continuum" made all the more effective through visibility that is a trap for a controlling system of power-knowledge. The same may be said of all the Bogside murals produced by the Bogside artists. In this sense they lock themselves into a modern paradigm of art as an artistic appropriation of iconoclasm (the desire to get rid of any image can be realized only through a new image). Thus despite the use of the term 'document', experience in these murals is represented as an object of contemplation. This runs the risk that relating cerebrally and aesthetically to its structure will rob the potential for change. By comparison, revolutionary solidarity and agitprop is conveyed in the performativity of a mural painted in 1981 which shows a dead hunger striker being carried from Long Kesh prison. The force of this sublime imagery in which the death drive is present slackens off the grasp of reason and stirs a sense of the new as an insurgent act; an

[14] On line at http://www.derryjournal.com/journal?articleid=3083613 retrieved 03/03/09
[15] On line at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/bogsideartists/mural6/ retrieved 03/03/09.

innovation and interruption of the performance of the present, in the sense understood by Benjamin which refigures the past as a contingent in-between space. It is arguably no coincidence that the McCartney mural avoids symbolism which might explain the reason for the hunger strike (that the prisoners were Prisoners of war fighting for a 32 counties Ireland Republic)—a signifier that would most likely refigure the mural as a prompt to activism. Consequently the representation is the focal point of a funereal historicism which naturalizes the community with a sense of monolithic mortality. Each year thousands of Derry citizens gather to hear speeches and dedications. In 2008 on the 40th anniversary of the Civil rights march, in the year when Bernadette Devlin McAliskey declared that she didn't care about the image (the mural painted in the Bogside showing her shouting through a megaphone), Raymond McCartney who is now Foyle Sinn Féin MLA described the commemorations which took place in Derry in terms reminiscent of a civic Irish wake for local lads:

> 'I think it's important for us because five of the Hunger Strikers came from Derry: Patsy O'Hara and Michael Devine from the city and then Francis Hughes, Tom McElwee and Kevin Lynch from the county. We've a very, very hard-working 1981 committee in Derry and at the 20th and 25th anniversaries we hosted very successful and well-attended events in the city. The march will start at the Creggan shops and the route will take people by the two houses where Patsy and Michael were waked. In fact, the route goes directly by Michael Devine's house. The march will go down Rossville Street to the hunger strike monument where the families will lay floral tributes'.[16]

But this is a parade that assumes a specific interpretive community. When members of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement (32CSM),[17] daubed graffiti on a mural of the twelve hunger strikers in nearby Bishop Street in support of Gary Donnelly a prominent 32CSM activist, who at that time was refusing food in Magheraberry prison and painted similar slogans in a number of areas of the city, including the City Walls overlooking Fahan Street, Raymond McCartney publicly condemned their actions and accused the "dissidents' of breaking an "unwritten rule" by doing so. [18] This mediating transformation unhinges the certainty of meaning that the McCartney mural is a signifier for 'Brits Out' and instead suggests a pacification of the present. The power invested in the discursivity of the Bogside

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[16] On line at www.anphoblacht.com/news/detail/32715 retrieved 03/03/09.
[17] The 32CSM's stated political aims are: The restoration of Irish national sovereignty; to seek to achieve unity among the Irish people on the issue of restoring national sovereignty and to promote the revolutionary ideals of republicanism and to this end involve itself in resisting all forms of colonialism and imperialism. On line at http://www.derry32csm.com retrieved 03/03/09.
[18] Derry Journal of 19th March, 2010On line at http://www.derryjournal.com/journal/Republican-anger-at-hunger-strike.6166341.jp retrieved 25/03/10.

murals, in their metorphorizing thus manifests an ideological nostalgia for the past that has become another form of textuality— an event which can be narrated and documented.

In his important study *Terrorism and Modern literature*, Alex Houen points out that Paul Arthur, offering the hunger strikes as an example, claims that they contained "all the ingredients of a successful myth in the making and can be seen as part of a narrative" (Houen, 2002: p. 244), and that drawing on Lyotard, Allen Feldman argues similarly that events of political violence exist as narrative blocs – plastic organizations involving language, material artifacts and relations that put into play a constellation of events and discourses about events, as Event. This, argues Houen, gestures towards a "performativity of violence that enforces a political or religious message," (Houen, 2002: p. 245) which he argues is problematic when the metaphorizing attributed to the events leads to them being seen as simply another form of textuality- as when Feldman asserts that, "The event is that which can be narrated" (quoted in Houen, 245). The problematic here is that the sheer physical force of violence is thus occluded. For this reason he suggests "we should be careful" in asking the sort of question that Clair Wills poses in regard to Northern Ireland: "Can terrorism in all its various forms be said to harbour a theory of narrativity and temporality?"(Houen, 2002: p.245). Wills, Houen suggests, argues that postmodernism has problemetized terrorism's narrativity. According to Wills, if terrorism is necessarily arbitrary, dependent on anonymity, rupture, then it becomes an anti-narrative, more like a postmodern *bricolage*. But she argues this will deny violence "political representativeness"; she therefore concludes by calling for the "political structures of the nation state" to be considered along with the "mythic or symbolic" aspects of terrorism. This conformism which reduces violence to a metaphor, as Houen points out fails to examine the physical significance of violence: an anti-narrative *bricolage* is still an aesthetic artefact. It is, I suggest this conformist interaction with the socio-political context which underpins the Bogside murals – they do not interrupt the performance of the present but rather seek an accommodation with the 'political structures of the state' so that their symbolic or mythic aspects will be recognized and accredited. The physical violence relating to the hunger strikes – the decay, filth and torture that went with it has been replaced with logocentric notions of the 'human document'. Although referring to the Free Derry Wall, Bernadette McAliskey writing in the compilation *Free Derry Wall* edited by Collins and Kerr might well have been also referring to the bureaucratic mode of documented conformity infused into the Bogside murals when she observed:

> The character of controlled expression remains, informing the inhabitants of their opinion, lest they forget what it should be. A committee and a long waiting list of opinions to be assessed and appropriately expressed ... a criteria and quality standards which are applied to the process. One

> must perhaps, not only have a message but be able to demonstrate acceptable artistic style, capacity and articulation in expressing it; have access to quality paint and painters and be able to deliver the finished product within a specified time frame, as well as monitor the impact.
>
> — (Collins and Kerr, 2009: pp.92-93).

Social contingency and indeterminacy, as Bhabha points out in referring to Fanon, is not a celebration of fragmentation, *bricolage*, pastiche and the 'simulacrum' but is a vision of social contradiction and cultural difference which anticipates a revolt (Bhabha, 1994: p.238). The Bogside murals however are not positioned on contingency and revolution but on a binary axis with Unionism and with British hegemony. The production of meaning that relies on these binaries as a foundation for change is inherently problematic since any new meaning that might come into being does so as reactive to the reductive binary model, whereby meaning exists as an effect of another – that is it is inscribed in relation to a hierarchy of closure. As Culler argues, the unmarked term (the term asserting its presence) is presented as originative and fundamental whilst its 'opposite', the marked term (asserted through its absence) is conceived in relation to the unmarked term as derivative, dependent, subordinate, supplemental or ancillary (Chandler, 2007: p. 111).

By presenting a continuum of past and present the cultural demands invested in the murals become what Bhabha calls nostalgia for living rather than its necessity. For Bhabha the work of culture engaged with the colonial borderline is necessarily powered by a forceful contestation (it "demands an encounter") which requires a sense of the new– that is an art that does not recall the past as an aesthetic precedent but which refigures the past as an 'in-between space' and interrupts the performance of the present. (Bhabha, 1994: p.7) An art of this sort inhabits the here and now rather than looking back. Consequently the sense of timeless certainty written into the cultural code of these murals seeks to reify as origin or *presence* (in the Derridean sense) its metaphors and metonyms. But these metaphors are derivative – they suggest unfair treatment at the hands of the authorities. They look back and say: Look what you did to us. In Derrida's terms they necessarily constitute the primary term and are required to complete the primary term, and are hence marginal. Consequently state sanctioned mediation through programmes such as the ReImaging project demonstrate disjunction rather than a homogeneous national culture and underpin, consolidate and extend the processes of polarisation, segregation and division. For this reason the observations of Bhabha are pertinent to the Northern Ireland position. Writing in the context of postcoloniality Bhabha argues that the colonial 'Western metropole' must confront its postcolonial history as a native narrative "internal to its national identity" (Bhabha, 1994: p. 6). While Brits are NOT out, a prescriptive multiculturalism in Northern Ireland may be construed as such a

narrative by giving the *impression* (my italics) of British justice. But the signifier of self determination would not. The notion of national identity is thus contained in the *idea* (my italics) of the UK. This is made clear from instances that occurred during the homecoming parade for the local British army unit, the RIR, returning from Iraq and Afghanistan which explains the shift in engagement with British presence in Northern Ireland away from the murals to street activism.

Questions of solidarity and community in nationalism/republicanism from an interstitial perspective have opened up between acts of representation and the presence of the community. Groups such as Sinn Féin and the SDLP (Social Democratic and Labour Party) support electoral engagement with the British government through British institutions; others such as the 32CSM, the RIRA (Real Irish Republican Army), the CIRA (Continuity Irish Republican Army) [19] the IRSP (Irish Republican Socialist Party) and éirígí do not. For éirigí the emergence of a mass consciousness forming its own narrative provides a Marxist foundation opposed to the structured constraints of the constitutional arrangements of the Good Friday Agreement.[20] These splits and struggles for power within the nationalist community have fractured its homogenous marginality.

Thus the homecoming military RIR parade emerged as an arena of organized consent in the emergent official discourse of 'biculturalism'. The original plan envisaged a RAF flypast over West Belfast and marching armed troops whose route would take them past the nationalist Markets area. Compromise formulations from Sinn Féin that the return be recognized through a 'civic reception and a religious service' suggested a difference in approach and authority between the British military and politicians resting on the assumption that the British Government will bring about reform in the north. However the compromise struck was one where tolerance "is always on the side of the strongest" (Habermas – Philosophy in a time of Terror) and saw the Minister of Defence agree to cancel the fly past, the troops on parade were to be without guns and the tunes to be played were changed in return for which Sinn Féin agreed to reroute its planned protest march. Developments on the day were reminiscent of the triumphalism of the Orange march of the Twelfth and King Billy. Some twenty thousand unionists ranging across all classes came out to support the parade. All the unionist political leaders were present, including DUP leader and first prime minister, Peter Robinson who the previous day had told his annual party conference that there would be no concessions to nationalists. As the first military parade to take place in Belfast in fifty years it was the first clear demonstration of British control.

[19] Only 14% of Catholics see the dissident groups as a threat. On line at http://www.liv.ac.uk/politics/staff-pages/ESRCSurvey/index.htm retrieved 08/10/10.
[20] On line at http://www.eirigi.org/about_us/faq.htm retrieved 25/03/10.

The *Irish Times* noting that the military parade and protests provided what it called "a powerful symbol for the peace process—imperialist triumph and republican impotence" illustrated its observations with a graphic report of the point where the protest met the relatives of the victims of state violence:

> About twenty members of the Relatives for Justice, who were a component of the Sinn Fein protest, came forward to offer symbolic opposition to the parade. As they did so they were met with a barrage of abuse from a baying mob of loyalists across the street. Some of them had scaled the scaffolding of a building opposite from where they threw fireworks and bolts. They chanted '*Scum, scum, scum,*' in football terrace fashion, marking the rhythm by stabbing fingers pointing towards west Belfast from where the republican protestors had marched.. Chants switched from '*The famine is over – why don't you go home*', '*Take a bath you f***king scum,*' and '*Do you want a chicken supper for Bobby Sands.*' The venom of the loyalist mobs even took some journalist observers aback. Dan Keenan of the *Irish Times* described it as the '*type of ugly, spitting behaviour that had powered long years of physical violence.*' These scenes of raw bigotry were played out with the sight of Sinn Féin leaders and cadres who had participated in and marshalled the protest. For them the military parade and the treatment of protestors was a humiliation.[21]

The RIR parade therefore was one of particular significance to the question of Brits Out. Parading in Northern Ireland is a dramatic form of particularly intense political and cultural significance tensed to a dichotomy of triumphalism and resistance. Some 3000 parades take place annually. Although the parades by Unionism may appear loosely theatrical they are attentive to the principle of 'Britishness'; historically the state has facilitated and encouraged the parades by unionism while constraining Irish Nationalist parades. Thus although ritual infuses the parades, in particular those of unionism, common elements that are often found in rituals such as arcane language, visual displays, (which include flags, banners, sashes bands, bonfires and murals), bodily exertions and parading are not open to a multiplicity of meaning, but in the case of unionism are transparent demonstrations of state power. Nationalist/republican parades on the other hand mostly manifest restrained acts of resistance articulated through rituals of commemoration. Neil Jarman suggests that parades by the protestant loyal orders were established as virtual rituals of state and supported by government ministers, lesser politicians and establishment figures. In contrast public services organized by nationalists were suppressed by the police (Jarman, *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, 2003, Vol. 3 No. 1: pp. 92-105). However a new axis of confrontation emerges from the homecoming parade, one that is aimed at embedding the values and attitudes of 'Britishness' in the

[21] On line at http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2008/ retrieved 20/11/08.

oppositional community. For example, in response to a question from the DUP leader the *Irish Times* 3rd November, 2008 reports that the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown told the Commons that he fully supported the homecoming parade and that 'our armed forces' deserved the support of every community. He went on to claim that there had been parades in towns and cities across Britain that had attracted large numbers of people who wanted to 'give support to our troops and ensure that they have the confidence of the British people' this despite the fact that no other major city in Britain has hosted a military parade of the scale that took place in Belfast. Nevertheless this was a clear invitation to unionists and loyalists to turn out for the parade in Belfast; and also an assertion that Belfast was a British city where troops should be welcome by all. Ultimately however the test of hegemony is whether the ruling class is able to impose its spiritual authority on its subjects, lend them moral and political leadership and persuade them of its own vision of the world. On these counts the Anglo Irish of unionism and loyalism must be reckoned a success; the Irish poet, barrister and Ulster Scot, Sir Samuel Ferguson speaks of: "the idea of erecting the bulwark of the state in the hearts of the inhabitants" (cited in Lloyd, 1987: p. 57). Statistical data suggests that among nationalist voters, the Union, as a constitutional arrangement is more popular than unionism as a political movement; but its spiritual authority over Irish nationalism is not secure.

In response to the homecoming parade éirígí challenged the British provocation with its own demonstration. The éirígí backed protest provided some indication of the growing demand for British withdrawal from Northern Ireland. The first comment to make is on its size. With 350 militants it was a respectable fraction of the 2000 people on the Sinn Féin demonstration. The éirígí protestors carried placards with the writing: British War Machine out of Ireland and Oppose Britain's Murder Machine juxtaposed against the letters RIR in red on a black background; also carried were the Irish tricolour flag and the Starry Plough flag of the IRSP. The performance of the placards, flags, writing, the protestors, the armed forces, barricades, weapons and armed vehicles produce a transitional message in the sense that they relate to the immediate issue and 'demand an encounter' on the borderline and open up modes of possibilities. And this is possible with the protest-image because it is viewed by the spectator not as an aesthetic *bricolage*, representation but as a contingency embedded in living time waged in the name of activity and movement.

The here and now of this image, which is a living image on the eye as it occurs, should be contrasted with the function of art as a medium of representation. For example the encounters represented in the Bogside murals have acquired their own specificity. In these images the ugly cruelty that lies behind the surface of the conventional idealized image has not been documented; rather the mural itself has been invested with a history and narrative of its own which seeks recognition. This means that the politics played out in the arena of the RIR/Sinn Féin/ éirígí parade and protest and the art of the Bogside

artists are connected in one fundamental respect: both are areas in which a struggle for recognition and social legitimacy is being waged. The presumption underwriting this comparison is that both arenas are iconoclastic—a radical challenge which negates that which exists by creating a narrative that will capture the imagination, thereby altering society—a belief in the iconoclastic capacity of the image of which Boris Groys speaks as that which "represents a revolt against a passive, contemplative mode of conduct" (Groys, 2008: p. 74).

However the protest image and the murals of the Bogside artists pivot on oppositional axes. Although the protest itself is undoubtedly iconoclastic, the protest image is not. The performance is intended to produce an image that the spectator would tend to accept as being 'real', as being 'true' because it is through the acceptance of the image as an 'icon' that the political legitimacy of the forces in contest gain legitimacy. It is thus iconophilic and as such is an image of what Groys calls the political sublime (Groys, 2008: p.126). The protest image thus seeks to replace the existing image with a new image and not merely challenge it. That it is able to do so is because it draws its power both from the critique of representation as mimesis and from deconstructing strategies of pictorial idealization. However, the iconoclastic gesture deployed as an art strategy in the murals of the Bogside artists seeks the power of the medium itself rather than a new ideological message.

Fig. 78 éirígí protest (1).

Fig. 79 éirígí protest (2).

The notion of the sublime has its origins in the writings of the anonymous author Longinus, a Greek teacher of rhetoric and literary critic who lived somewhere between the First and Third Century AD, who in his treatise O*n the Sublime* broadly argued that the sublime is an energy source of power and strength. Since the 18th century the notion of the sublime is often associated with the analysis by Immanuel Kant who offered as examples of sublimity on one hand, mountains or oceans, phenomena that appear to dwarf normal human proportions. In addition as instances of dynamic sublimity he offered colossal natural events such as storms, volcanic eruptions, and other catastrophes whose overpowering force directly threatens our lives. These perilous and traumatic catastrophes slacken off the grasp of reason, or at any rate they are incompatible with knowledge. It is at the same time enrapturing as well as devastating; it is not hard to detect in it the presence of the death drive. It allows us to vicariously indulge our fantasies of immortality; to experience our destruction in art rather than reality is to live out a kind of virtual death. Confronted with the vista of raging oceans which cannot drown us or mountains from which we cannot plummet down because they are no more than pigment on canvas, we can know the pleasure of defeating death. In this way it is both self affirmative and self destructive. But when terror ceases to be second hand it quickly sheds its allure, as Edmund Burke in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* was able to show."When danger and pain press too nearly,' he observes, "they are incapable of giving any delight and are simply terrible," and there Burke uses as an example of the sublime the public beheadings and tortures that were common in the centuries before the enlightenment. Immanuel Kant was aware of this when he commented in his *Critique of Judgement* that

"it is impossible to find satisfaction in terror that is seriously felt." For Kant, sublime eruptions like the French Revolution could be admired as long as they were aestheticized and contemplated from a secure distance. Benjamin has noted that law and order is structured on fear and terror which has been safely defused. For Edmund Burke the law itself is an image of sublimity, since it must blend terror and kindliness, coercion and consent. But it is not only when law and order breaks down that terror is unleashed – terror is also a built in possibility, a disaster waiting to happen. This is not a sublimity that both appals and seduces. Instead argues Terry Eagleton, in his study of terror, *Holy Terror* (2005) pity and fear are wrenched apart in a process of desublimation where the horrors of the tragic and the sublime invade everyday life.

Many writers who investigated the sublime during the 18th Century drew a careful distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. In his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel writes of the exposure of mass beheadings by guillotine in the centre of revolutionary Paris that it created true equality among men because it made clear that no one can claim any more that his death has any higher meaning. This opens the way for nations to portray themselves as beautiful by depoliticizing the sublime. Benjamin has already shown the distinction between the politicization of aesthetics where the masses have a role to play rather than the aestheticization of politics. An example of the latter is the beautification of totalitarian nations. But now we experience not the return of the real but of the repoliticization of the sublime where contemporary politics very often does not represent itself as beautiful—it represents itself as terrifying and ugly. Acts of terror produce ugly and repelling counter acts of openly acknowledged acts of torture, subterfuge, humiliation, spying and breaches of rights of privacy, body searches at airports. This is a development in which terror is matched by terror, what Derrida calls a necessity of the failures of the autoimmune system of the contemporary western state that needs to terrorize itself in order to feel secure (Borradori, 2003: pp.108-109). It is as though the political forces of the nations concerned increasingly produce this politicization of the sublime by competing for the strongest, most terrifying image.

The contrast between the political sublime image and conventional idealized representational imagery emerges from an image on the Bogside. One of these murals is an image of a 'rioter' facing an army tank. Painted in shades of grey and black it shows an army Saracen vehicle turning in towards a young man whose back is to the viewer. He holds a wire grid which he faces towards the Saracen vehicle and a stone hidden behind his back. The two front portals of the Saracen are blackened out; it presents a particularly threatening attack. It is scripted as follows:

> This mural is called Saturday Matinee, the time when young people played the dangerous game of confronting the police and the army. As he prepares to throw a stone the boy protects himself with

a shield of wire mesh. He faces a cloud of CS gas and the army Saracen armoured vehicle which is swerving round to face him. The turning vehicle gave the moment the tension it needed. Now the rioter looks for all the world like a matador facing a charging bull.

Fig. 80 Saturday Matinee mural

This script invests the mural with a number of conventional associations – the 'matinee' and the 'game' and 'young people'. However, the symbolic value of this mural and the empirical event which it documents carry very different associations. The symbolism is a representation of acts shown on the following 1980's poster.

Fig. 81 Poster – Resist British Rule

The poster, which itself is a reproduced photograph shows an IRA fighter in camouflage and balaclava hurling a barrel of burning petrol at an approaching British army Saracen vehicle; this image and the writing 'Resist British Rule' convey a clear agitational message. Whereas the mural depicts the person of the Republican activist as a static figure involved in a game, the poster depicts an act of violent movement and contestation. The poster opens the surface of the conventional idealized image and reveals to us the terrifying reality we always suspected was there; we see that things are as bad as we expected, maybe worse. And precisely because of this we feel compelled to recognize this image as being true. The mural on the other hand depicts an inscribed narrative that opens itself to criticism – it is not terrible enough by itself. The purpose of the mural can be seen to shift away from the political project (the mural fails to probe the persistence of British rule), to that of a cultural demand. But more significantly the poster unfolds the sublime, repelling, terrifying but alluring image which enables us to live out the experience without being involved in the danger ourselves. In a sense it is the enemy of the artist because it claims to be an image that is true and real – beyond any criticism of representation. Of course, the point Burke had originally tried to make is that a terrifying sublime image of violence is merely an image; an image of terror is also produced. Thus when the image of the political sublime is put into circulation it acquires the symbolic value of a representation of the political sublime and as with any other image, it is subject to criticism more particularly against censorship and mediation. This kind of criticism does not indicate any lack of moral sense. Any moral consideration relates only to the empirical event that is documented by the image.

The iconoclastic éirígí performance can thus be understood in image terms to provoke an alternative but iconophilic meaning. The events of that day can be contrasted with the hunger strike parades. While the massive support for the Hunger Strike parades is able to provide what Genet calls an ethics of community, which halts the possibility of a never ending deferral, where the parade, such as the RIR military parade and protest break down along community lines, the divisive issues collapse the possibility of unity and qualifies the discourse of biculturalism with a barrage of modal auxiliaries delineating the variables of community and political identity. The murals depicting the morphed Margaret Thatcher through to the Resist British Rule poster are thus rearticulated in the political project of the éirígí protest-image with an incisive demand that continues the polemic of 'Brits Out' through an ostensible demand for self determination.

Notes

[i] Refer to: Niall O'Dochartaigh, *Bloody Sunday: Error or Design*? in *Contemporary British History* Volume 24 Issue _1 March 2010. pp. 89 – 108 in which the author argues that the Bloody Sunday operation was a calculated plan devised at a very high level to stage a massive and unprecedented confrontation that would disrupt and shatter an established policy of security force restraint in the city of Derry. It argues further that the operation that day emerged from an intense internal struggle to shape security policy that reflected deep divisions within the security forces, analysing the statements and evidence of key participants much more critically than existing accounts do. It argues that high-level decision-making is central to the explanation of the outcome that day and that the operation raises serious questions about the relationship between political decision-making and the operational decision-making of the army in Northern Ireland.

[ii] An aspect of death squad activity in Northern Ireland which lent it its specificity was the interface between state forces and loyalist paramilitary groups. Charged in 2002 with investigating six cases of collusion, Canadian retired judge Peter Cory defined collusion by the state by including not merely the commission of acts of violence but also 'ignoring or turning a blind eye to the wrongful acts of their servants or agents or supplying information to assist them in their wrongful acts or encouraging them to commit wrongful acts'. This 'collusion continuum' involved state agents at various points in directing terrorist operations; failing to act on intelligence provided by agents within paramilitary groups in order to prevent crime; providing weaponry, intelligence and logistical support (including clean getaway after an assassination); failure to investigate death squad activity either through direct instructions to criminal investigators or through a more generalized culture of dismissal; and direct action against investigators (such as the destruction of evidence in police custody) (Rolston, p. 191).

[iii] The British army's Force Research unit (FRU) was also aware of an arms procurement trip to South Africa made by Nelson a Northern Ireland born ex-British soldier in early 1988. However, they mysteriously lost track of the arms consignment before it reached Northern Ireland. As a result, a substantial amount of military hardware was made available to loyalists that vastly enhanced their killing capacity. Between January 1982 and December 1987, loyalists killed 71 people, 49 of whom were nationalists. Between January 1988 and August 1994, they killed 229 people, 207 of whom were nationalists.

[iv] Ibid. p.192 When British troops were deployed on the streets of Belfast in August 1969, it was ostensibly to protect nationalists under attack from mobs of loyalists and members of the local part-time paramilitary police force, the B Specials. At the same time, it was clear from at least the beginning of 1970that an insurgency was brewing, leading to the conclusion that the British army was to be involved in a counter-insurgency mode in Northern Ireland.

[v] Originally named Derry, the name was changed to Londonderry during the Plantation of Ulster in 1613 to reflect the establishment of the city by the London guilds. Officially the city is named Londonderry. Despite the official name the city is more commonly referred to as Derry, which is the name nationalist and republican communities prefer, although Unionists continue to refer to it under its official name.

[vi] Bernadette Devlin McAliskey served as an MP at Westminster from 1969 to 1974 and was a founding member of The Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) and Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) founded in 1974 having the aims of socialist revolutionary James Connolly — a 32 county socialist republic, free and independent of British control, and run by the Irish working class. On line at: —
On line at http://www.irsp.ie/ and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernadette_Devlin_McAliskey retrieved 26/08/10

[vii] For some time in the hands of a largely Marxist leadership in far-off Dublin, the IRA high command favoured political methods over the gun and the military side of the organisation had been run down. It was widely believed, for instance, that much of the IRA's weaponry had been sold to the Free Wales Army and while this explanation was probably apocryphal, it was beyond doubt that the IRA had next to no guns to defend areas such as Clonard. See MacStiofain, 1975: p.142. At the time, the IRA and Sinn Féin were small organizations, politically marginal.

[viii] The Troubles can be viewed as having begun almost a millennium ago with the first English involvement in Ireland in 1170 (when Turlogh O'Connor overthrew Dermot MacMurrough King of Leinster. MacMurrough asked

King Henry II of England for help. MacMurrough rewarded the English soldiers that helped him to regain his kingdom with land); or early in the twentieth century with the Anglo Irish war of 1919. Most certainly though they were precipitated on the 5th October 1968 when a civil rights march in Derry turned violent. Significant subsequent events were the 'Battle of the Bogside' on 12 August 1969 and the deployment of British troops on 14 August 1969.

[ix] During August 1969 Loyalist attacks resulted in eight deaths on the night of 14/15 August, and 145 civilians and four RUC members were wounded. At least 170 homes and 16 factories were destroyed by fire, including the whole of Bombay Street; and hundreds fled their homes in the days after. A report furnished to the Scarman Tribunal showed that 1,820 families fled their homes in Belfast in July, August, and September 1969. Of those fleeing, 1,505 or 82.7 percent were Catholic. The report calculated that 5.3 percent of all Catholic households in the city had been displaced, compared with 0.4 percent of Protestant families. On 23 February 1974, the Commission for Community Relations announced that from 1969 to 1973, 60 000 people had been forced to move from their homes in Northern Ireland – this constituted the largest population exodus in Europe since the Second World War. Nationalists were the most affected. A whole generation of 'sixty-niners' filled the ranks of the PIRA as a result of this. A full survey is provided in Malony, 2010: p.13 and on.

[x] The centrality of Bombay Street as a site of spiritual and cultural significance is revealed in the inscriptions and detail of the memorial. Central yard - black and white Celtic cross in the middle, with the inscription "Clonard Martyrs i gcuimhme na mairbh dilis". On the wall behind it - granite plaque featuring a male and a female Volunteer with bowed heads on each side; on top runs the inscription: "i measc laocra na ngaedeal go rab siad go ndeana dia trocaire ar a n-anamaca"; two panels are enframed within a Celtic design with the shields of the four provinces of Ireland, one at each corner; left panel - "Clonard Martyrs C Coy 2nd Battalion Belfast Brigade Oglaigh na hEireann Roll of Honour (list stating name and date of death follows). We also remember all the civilians from the Clonard area who were killed by Crown forces and loyalist murder gangs". Right panel - "Civilians murdered by loyalists and British forces during the course of the conflict (list stating name, date and age of death follows)". Right yard - on the boundary walls there are a series of plaques running from left to right as follows: 1)"1921-1922 (list of names follows)". 2)"In loving memory of the deceased Republican prisoners from the Greater Clonard area 1916 (list of names follows) 1920's (list of names follows)". 3)" 1930's/40's (list of names follows)". 4)"1956-62 (list of names follows) 1970 (list of names follows)". Along the walls there are a series of benches, each one accompanied by a small golden plaque "Dedicated to the memory of" - clockwise - Seamus (Shay) Sullivan, Frank Moyna, Lily, Sam and Tony Lewis; next to the gate small golden plaque reads: "This gate was donated by the Roddy McCorley Club". Stone pavement depicting a Celtic cross. Left yard - plaque on the wall reads: "This plaque is dedicated to the people of the Greater Clonard who have resisted and still resist the occupation of our country by Britain. We acknowledge with pride the sacrifices they made throughout every decade. Their names would be too numerous to mention, and their deeds of bravery and resistance are un-equalled in the history of our struggle. We, the Republican ex-prisoners of the Greater Clonard, salute you, and your reward will only be a united Ireland."; shields of the four provinces of Ireland, one at each corner. Along the walls there are a series of benches, each one accompanied by a small golden plaque "Dedicated to the memory of" - counter-clockwise - Renee & Marie Rosbotham, Alex Comerford, Helena Kelly. Next to the gate - small golden plaque "This gate was donated by the Michael Dwyers G.A.C. (1798)" and small golden plaque "Dedicated to the memory of Maura Meehan" and Stone pavement depicting a Celtic cross.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Re-Imaging Programme

— Identity politics; language delegitimizes resistance; the marching season

Republican and Loyalist Murals post Peace Agreement

The Peace Lines

— The wall occupies the site; semiotic power is shifted from the agency of the participants to the context.

The Peace Line is the New Mural

Re-Imaging

> Our theatre critic Peter Crawley, writing in today's paper of Friel's portrait of lives "suspended between memory and hope, a misty past and uncertain future..." could be describing the way many young people now see themselves. In truth, if we are redefining ourselves – our Irishness – at the moment, it is unfortunately largely in a discourse dominated by the negative. We are not Greeks. We are not Icelanders. We are not rich. We are not the citizens any more of a vibrant, confident state, but of a broken polity. We are no longer the masters we believed ourselves to be of our own fates, but hapless players of hands dealt to us by others, by huge uncontrollable forces beyond our understanding. —*The Irish Times* - editorial of 17th March 2010.

A mural appeared in 1998 on the gable end of a house on Tavanagh Street in the mainly protestant Village area of Belfast. The iconography in this mural is a representation of Iron Maiden's Eddie figure carrying a rifle, but no flag, with the scythe-carrying reaper in the background. Surrounded by the crests of the UFF and UDA and the writing – "Ulster Freedom Fighters The Village, Donegall Rd, Ormeau Rd, Roden St, Lisburn Rd, Sandy Row" it was located alongside an adjoining wall bearing the following message: "Through the lonely streets of Ulster, the Reaper come's to call, he travel's from town to city, right down to Derry's wall. When the UFF they call him, to come and join the fight, he say's if the bullet doesn't kill them, they'll surel'y die from fright. So when you're in your bed at night, and hear soft footsteps fall, be careful it's not the UFF and Reaper come to call".

Fig. 82 Loyalist mural – Iron Maiden's Eddy

Homi Bhabha's term 'grotesque mimicry' is an appropriate classification of the representation in this mural. As part of his foundational analysis of colonial discourse and the emergence of 'inappropriate' colonial subjects, Homi Bhabha (1994) argues that the racial stereotype gives access to an identity that is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, that is to say it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it. Deploying Foucault's analytics of power he explored the 'psychic sphere of colonial relations' as foundational to his claim that like all power holders, colonial authorities unconsciously incite 'refusal, blockage, and invalidation' in their attempts at constant surveillance (Bhabha 1994: p. 11). To refine his theory of active subaltern resistance, Bhabha used three interconnected concepts: mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity.

Mimicry is: 'the [colonizer's] desire for a reformed, recognizable 'Other', as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite' (Bhabha 1994: p. 86). Thus for example British desire for the 'Other' to mimic 'Britishness' while also maintaining segregation, created the primary site of subaltern agency in India (Bhabha 1994: p. 86). Interlinked with mimicry, Bhabha used ambivalence to explore an informed identity struggle between both parties based on 'conflictual feelings and attitudes' (Bhabha 1994: p. 67). This ambivalent axis of aversion and desire which is at once a recognition of difference and disavowal of it has a fundamental significance for colonial discourse – a significance which is precisely the subject's primal fantasy for a pure origin that is always threatened by its division. This means that the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its

authority. However, where the colonial subject disavows difference, "the colonial subject turns into a misfit, a grotesque mimicry or doubling" of the colonial power (Bhabha 1994: p. 107). The stereotype, he argues is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixed form of representation that in denying the play of difference constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations (Bhabha, 1994: p. 107). This means that access to the recognition of difference is denied whereas it is the particular possibility of difference that would liberate the signifier of culture from the fixations of the analytics of blood, ideologies and cultural dominance or degeneration. And it is precisely in this sense that the 'Eddie' mural, at once a threat against the republican, is also a grotesque mimicry which finds the loyalist paramilitary and the unionist denying difference from their colonial occupier by itself undertaking action to preserve the colonial discourse.

The Tavanagh Street mural was replaced in 2008 at a cost of £18000, as one of 18 new commissioned public art projects forming part of the rhetoric of the 'Re-Imaging Communities' programme. Negotiations on the repainting had already began five years before with the loyalist paramilitary Ulster Defence Association (UDA) which eventually decided that the mural should be replaced by a King William portrait. The Council's chief executive, Roisin McDonough described the Iron Maiden mural as divisive and offensive, but that "The fact that it's being replaced by King William is not an act of triumphalism. King William is not offensive to people in this area. It's part of their legitimate Orange cultural heritage."[1] These sentiments cohere with the official explanation: 'The professional artist, John Darren Sutton worked with the community to create four pieces of art representing alternative images that celebrate the culture and identity of the area – one of the projects involves the replacing of the 'Grim Reaper' paramilitary mural with a traditional artwork on canvas of 'King William of Orange' as a traditional figure which reflects the Orange culture of that community and the village area.' [2]

[1] On line at saoirse32.blogsome.com/2008/03/07/uda-says-ok-to-king-william/ retrieved 11/08/10.
[2] On line at news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern.../7282868.stm retrieved 10/10/09.

Fig. 83 Mural - King Billy

The mural is a skilled rendition of King Billy alone on his horse, painted by a professional artist in keeping with the fine art tradition of williamite imagery. The King Billy representation supplants the supporting role to paramilitary violence that it played in the militaristic imagery that prevailed during the Troubles, but it retains iconographic linearity with protestant ascendency. Noticeably absent from the image are paramilitary emblems, flags and writing. The image has been painted on canvas and is affixed to the wall where the 'Eddie' mural had been. The red wall background though has been retained. The mural has thus a general and universal quality. Whereas the 'Eddie' mural speaks of contestation (and hence indeterminacy) with the republican opposite, the new King Billy has been refigured with an ideology conveyed on an immanent plane in like manner with the Tübke mural. This exhibiting is an act of inscription placed, contextualized and narrativized by the curatorial state in which the colonized loyalist/unionist is no longer a grotesque mimicry but rather the pure mimic: "the [colonizer's] desire for a reformed, recognizable 'Other', as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (ibid), that is to say the Irish descendant of the English conqueror.

Replacement of the Eddie mural in Tavanagh Street has its origins in the so called 'Re-Imaging Communities' programme. During 2006 the Northern Ireland Government issued policy documents

which provided for an Action Plan designed to set a "clear framework for tackling disadvantage in some of the most deprived areas identifying more than 60 actions in response to the taskforce on working class protestant communities." [3] It noted that the Task Force identified a number of fundamental problems which needed to be addressed to meet the needs of "disadvantaged protestant communities." Among these disadvantages are listed educational disadvantages, a lack of social cohesion, active citizenship, and civic leadership and, prefaced as "a critical factor", the damaging influence of paramilitary organizations. Although the documents are prefaced with a belief in "a fair and inclusive society" sectarian divisions are built into its provisions. For example, in addition to the apparent disparities appearing in the provisions of the Action plan as one meeting the needs of disadvantaged protestant communities only, the documents hold that although poverty respects no boundary of religion, politics or community and that both catholic and protestant communities face real challenges as a result of poverty, it records that much of its support for work tackling disadvantage does not have the same impact in protestant communities as it does in catholic communities. Thus while "disadvantage and poverty are still greater in the catholic community," there is in those communities "a better developed capacity at community level to take advantage of the opportunities offered by Government funded programmes and services to support those communities." Emphasis is also laid on the need to improve education in disadvantaged protestant communities which are said to be "lagging behind" (ibid). The needs of disadvantage thus demonstrate sectarian division between catholic and protestant. The class which otherwise would be identified as working class is distinguished in the Plan as catholic disadvantaged or protestant disadvantaged.

One of the 60 actions is the Renewing Communities Action Plan, described as "Place and Identity/In Art we Trust", and subsequently labelled the 'Re-Imaging Communities Programme' a small grants programme of £5,000 per project to "enable local organizations and community groups, previously not involved in this area of work, to engage with professional artists to promote culture and arts within the local community." When the programme was launched in July 2006, it aimed to deliver 60 to 80 community-based projects within three years, with a spend of £3.3 million. Initial reports of the £3.3million fund announced by the Northern Ireland Office responsible for overseeing the Northern Ireland devolution settlement and representing Northern Ireland interests at UK Government level and UK Government interests in Northern Ireland, focused on how the money would be spent replacing loyalist paramilitary murals; but a statement released by the Department Culture, Arts and Leisure subsequently shifted the official version away from this narrow focus to that of the broad rhetoric of the Culture Minister, Maria Eagle: "New murals and public art will transform parks, housing estates and built-up areas across Northern Ireland, celebrating the aspirations of the whole community and helping

[3] On line at http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/40708_action_plan.pdf retrieved 05/11/10.

people feel part of their own local community," although the Minister also states "The purpose of the 'Re-Imaging Communities Programme' will be to engage local people and their communities in finding ways of replacing divisive murals and emblems with more positive imagery." The minister also announced that larger projects would be eligible for grants up to £50,000 and that new £100,000 'Place, Identity and Arts' small grants programme, aimed at fostering arts projects promoted by groups which have difficulties on religious and moral grounds with accessing funding from the National Lottery. [4] The Re-Imaging Communities Programme is managed by a Shared Communities Consortium made up of the Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers (OFMDFM); the Department for Social Development (DSD); the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI); the Community Relations Council (CRC); the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and; the International Fund for Ireland (IFI).

The Arts Council of North Ireland explained the programmatic strategy of the Action Plan as one that "places artists in the heart of communities to work with local people to tackle visible signs of sectarianism and racism to create a more welcoming environment for everyone". [5] It noted that when it launched in July 2006, the programme aimed to deliver 60 to 80 community-based projects within three years, but this number has been surpassed by 25 percent. 109 projects have been funded, "helping to restore pride to local neighbourhoods and moving Northern Ireland towards a normal, inclusive and stable society", it said (ibid). And the Belfast City Council described the project as one which "aims to transform communities by improving their environment and reflect the positive changes in Belfast. Sectarian murals, emblems, flags and graffiti will be replaced by positive images which reflect the community's culture, as well as highlight and promote the social regeneration taking place in communities today".[6]

The power of bureaucratic mediums to shape community response is inscribed in this programme. In doing so, the bureaucracy bolts the programmatic art tactically (in DeCerteau's usage) to postmodern notions of multiculturalism and diversity. One of the many projects involves replacing ten murals with violent imagery from the loyalist Shankill area of Belfast. One of these murals is the Drumcree Church Orange Order mural showing Portadown Orangemen marching on Garvaghy Road carrying banners reading: We demand the right to march and Portadown district LOL No.1. The mural also bears the loyalist Drumcree emblem and the writing: Drumcree – Here we stand we can do no other and the UFF emblem with the Red Hand of Ulster under the writing: Shankill Rd supports Drumcree. This mural which also shows the Drumcree church has been painted with elementary graphic and painterly skills.

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[4] On line at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/5163170.stm retrieved 13/08/10.
[5] On line at http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/award/re-imaging_communities.htm retrieved 13/08/10.
[6] On line at http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/re-image/ retrieved 13/08/10.

Fig. 84. Mural – Drumcree March.

Garvaghy Road in the Portadown area is a republican/nationalist dormitory and is a focus of contestation with loyalist forces parading from the Drumcree church through the Portadown district. The mural is an instant index to the mapping of partisan conflict and violence. The Lower Shankill Community Association worked with local residents to replace this and other murals with what the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Naomi Long described as images representing the area's "social, cultural and industrial heritage." [7] The dominant bureaucratic medium of this programme emerge in her rhetoric: "This is a prime example of what Re-Imaging is all about - taking us out of the divisions of the past into a new era of hope and enlightenment, reflecting the heritage of our diverse communities in a positive manner. Our vision is of a Belfast without barriers. The concept of renewal, change and respect lies at the heart of the 'Re-Imaging Communities' programme, which recognises the importance of creativity in all its manifestations and in all our lives, reflecting the heritage of our communities in a positive manner" (ibid). But of course this hyperbole is founded on the principles contained in the Government's Action Plan that tackles disadvantage defined by the binary of sectarian division between 'Catholic disadvantaged' or 'Protestant disadvantaged'. In his *Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography* Guy Debord defined Psychogeography as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the

[7] On line at http://www.culturenorthernireland.org/article.aspx?art_id=2803 retrieved 10/08/2010

geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals." [8] Here Debord was describing the mapping of atmospheric unities of a city, the mentally felt distances between areas experienced as distinct unities, but might just as well have been describing the sectarian barriers being imaged in Belfast, Derry or any town in Northern Ireland affected by Reimaging when he wrote:

> The sudden change of ambiance in a street within the space of a few meters; the evident division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres; the path of least resistance that is automatically followed in aimless strolls (and which has no relation to the physical contour of the terrain); the appealing or repelling character of certain places — these phenomena all seem to be neglected . . . In fact, the variety of possible combinations of ambiences, analogous to the blending of pure chemicals in an infinite number of mixtures, gives rise to feelings as differentiated and complex as any other form of spectacle can evoke.
>
> — (ibid. p.1)

Not semiotic content alone but precisely this mapping is evident in the mural replacing the Drumcree mural; called the 'Shankill A-Z mural' it restricts its mapping to the Shankill community. The nature of this art may be described as art documentary. By this I mean art that has developed under the conditions of the contemporary biopolitical age, in which life itself has become the object of technical and artistic intervention as demonstrated by authors Michel Foucault, Georgio Agamben and others who have written along the lines about biopolitics as the true realm in which political will and technological power to shape things are manifested today. Under these conditions of modern technology we are no longer able by visual means alone to make a firm distinction between the natural or organic and the artificial or technologically produced; demonstrated for example by discussion about the criteria for deciding when life begins and when it ends. In these circumstances the difference between a genuine living creature and an artificial substitute is taken to be merely a product of the imagination, a supposition that can neither be affirmed nor refuted by observation. Because the living thing thereby loses its unique inscription in time, documentation becomes indispensable, producing or inscribing the existence of the thing in history. Art as documentation in this sense therefore refers to art that is primarily narrative, that is to say it provides an origin by means of narrative.

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[8] *Introduction à une critique de la géographie urbaine* originally appeared in the Belgian surrealist journal *Les Lèvres Nues* #6 (September 1955). This translation by Ken Knabb is from the Situationist International Anthology (Revised and Expanded Edition, 2006).

Fig 85. Mural A-Z History of Shankill Road.

The mural is a digitally formatted collage of photographic images, for example the Orange Order march is represented by marching flute bands and the lambeg drum used during its marching season, historic buildings in the area are shown; there are images of community gatherings, a bust of Queen Victoria, a worker in overalls, children at play and portraits of people who were born or grew up there such as author C.S. Lewis and a local boxing legend David Healy. [i] The origin inscribed into the life of the community is made easier with its references to the flute bands. It is the young men, often members or supporters of the blood and thunder bands who play the most prominent role in decorating the areas and building the bonfires for the marching season. The bands often form a centre of social life; band halls function as social clubs and illegal bars, and many bands attract sizeable followings of friends and neighbours when they parade. Jarman notes that it is the band members who introduced paramilitary emblems to Orange parades, and this was extended on to many walls, as bandsmen co-opted mural painting for their own interests; thus a number of paintings celebrating flute bands appeared among paramilitary images. These paintings varied between those which created a trade mark image for the band and those which linked a band with a paramilitary group. The Roden Street Defenders band is linked symbolically and linguistically with the UDA, while the neighbouring Pride of the Village Flute Band incorporated their name into the Red Hand Commando mural adjacent to the King Billy on Rockland Street. The contested line between the UDA in Roden Street and the UVF/RHC in the Village coincides with the support for the two different bands. However there is some doubt whether depictions of the flute bands will resonate

with 'hope and enlightenment' in the minds and hearts of the nationalist community. The march on the twelfth July each year for example is inextricably linked to the iconography of King Billy which admits a single contingency of political domination; the reappearance of these icons, although aesthetically transfigured, does not remove their agency nor stop the contested parade through Portadown. Thus although the transparent reference to violence that was contained in the Drumcree mural has been removed, a more insidious replacement has taken place with the Shankill A-Z mural which inscribes as a cultural rite of passage, the irritant in the conflict with the nationalist community, namely the marching season.

These examples of a political practice that deploys imagery to dominate social convention strategize, in the sense understood by de Certeau the bureaucratic medium of art documentation to refigure a tradition and inscribe its refigured manifestation with a history so that it continues uninterrupted in a manner in which the fictive and the real become indistinguishable. In works such as *The History of Sexuality* and *Homo Sacer* Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben respectively have written along the lines that in an age of biopolitics as the true realm in which political will and technology's power to shape things are manifested today the lifespan of a person is constantly being shaped and artificially being improved as a pure activity that occurs in time. That is to say if life is no longer understood as a natural event, as fate, but rather as time artificially produced and fashioned, then life is automatically politicized, since the technical and artistic decisions with respect to the shaping of the lifespan are always political decisions as well. The art that is made under these conditions of biopolitics - under the conditions of an artificially fashioned lifespan – cannot help but take this artificiality as its theme. Now, however, time, duration, and thus life as well cannot be presented directly but only documented. The dominant medium of modern biopolitics is thus bureaucratic and technological documentation, which includes planning, decrees, fact finding reports, statistical enquiries and project plans.

In *Homo Sacer*, Giorgio Agamben points out that the 'bare life' has yet to achieve any political and cultural representation. He proposes that we view the concentration camp as the cultural representation of the bare life, because its inmates are robbed of all forms of political representation – the only thing that can be said of them is that they are alive. But life in a concentration camp can be reported—it can be documented—although it cannot be presented for view. Art documentation thus describes the realm of biopolitics by showing how the living can be replaced by the artificial and how the artificial can be made living by means of a narrative (Agamben, 1995: pp.166ff :). And Foucault claims that biological existence is reflected in political existence for the first time in history in modern society: "Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was

death, but with living beings … it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body" (Foucault, 1978: 143).

The programme thus links the artworks into a contemporary notion of art which documents and narrativizes the artificial. It is necessary to recognize here strategies and relations of force. The installation of the documented King Billy gains a site in a unionist locality —the here and now of an historical event (in Benjamin's usage). It is the narrative which inscribes it into the life of the community. And this narrative is one of biculturalism, "…a traditional artwork on canvas of 'King William of Orange' as a traditional figure which reflects the Orange culture of that community and the village area' (ibid). It thus removes the contestation that murals on either side of the contested axis were able to bring to one another. Either side is isolated in its own cultural paradigm. For example a recurrent problem is the demand of Orange marchers to pass through nationalist areas such as Garvaghy Road, Portadown (which is the march depicted in the mural replaced with the Shankill A-Z mural). As recently as during the 2010 march uncontrolled violence broke out and petrol bombs were thrown. In the past Republican murals have confronted the march along Garvaghy Road in a number of ways. One 1997 Portadown mural celebrated nationalist culture by portraying three Irish dancers. The image was repeated on the same wall the following year; however referring to the annual siege of the area by Orange marchers from the nearby Drumcree church, an Orangeman with a petrol bomb towers over the three dancers in the new mural. A few days later three young nationalist boys were burnt to death in a petrol bomb attack on their home in Ballymoney, the attack linked to the ongoing Drumcree march. 'Not all traditions deserve respect', noted another mural referring to the plight of the residents of Garvaghy Road. This mural is a commanding and complex image. A horseman cloaked and hooded in the style of the Ku Klux Klan, wearing the orange sash of the Orange Order, points to ancient Gaelic stones on an Ireland landscape. The stones bear the inscription: 'Garvaghy'. Flames have burnt the sky. The red of flames and blood contrasts with the blanched skulls on the landscape. The figure on horseback parodies King Billy. This factor of parody which pivots on ironic transcontextualization is the primary indicator that the point of articulation is not the historical battle giving rise to the tradition but the contemporary violent descendant of that tradition. At the same time its conflictual structure follows the dramatic axis between the Drumcree march and sectarian murder. A vision of cultural justice is thus tensed to the anchored and reified referents posited as formative namely the privilege infused in the tradition. But the dominant power is the one that manages to impose and thus to legitimate, indeed to legalize the interpretation that best suits it. Thus the Re-Imaging Programme invests this tradition with its own territorial specificity ("King William is not offensive to people in this area. It's part of their legitimate Orange cultural heritage"). The new King Billy mural depicts the warrior in fine attire and mounted on his rearing horse. Painted in a style that is linked to a fine

art tradition and which mimics the stereotypical pose of the hero warrior of old the paramilitary representation of the King is transposed back into the present as a living tradition supposed to certify its natural origin and inscribe a new life into the existence of King Billy in history. But the bureaucratic narrative driving the imagery is isolated to a specific community and its own legitimacy thereby augmenting the binary between the two traditions.

Fig. 86 Mural – Not all Traditions Deserve Respect.

Duncan Morrow, chief executive officer of the Community Relations Council, the primary body responsible for funding and development of the Programme tries to shift responsibility for removing the city's imagery onto the community. He claims the scheme is wholly reliant on interaction with the communities it involves. "There are two specific objectives," he explains. "A negative one, which is taking down aggressive displays, but the more important one is actually engaging with communities to talk and to work through how they would like to see their own image portrayed how they could promote their community."[9] Material injury which inscribes itself in the history of the original, Benjamin has observed carries with it less violence than destroying the original (removing the aura). He speaks not only of a loss of aura but of its destruction. And the violence of this destruction of aura is not lessened by the

[9] On line at www.guardian.co.uk/.../northern-ireland-racism-sectarian-violence-duncan-morrow retrieved 7/02/2010

fact that the aura is invisible. On the contrary, a material injury to the original is less violent, in Benjamin's view, because it still inscribes itself in the history of the original by leaving behind certain traces of its body. The deterritorialization of the original, its removal from its site represents, by contrast, an invisible and thus all the more devastating employment of violence because it leaves no material trace.

In this sense removing the murals is the more important engagement than their replacement. Benjamin speaks of how the state tends to appropriate for itself and precisely through threat, a monopoly on violence (Critique of Violence). The removal of violent imagery can thus be seen to pivot on confrontation with the paramilitary discourse —that grounds its activities *in* history rather than as simply another form of textuality—as an emphatic defeat of that discourse. Thus although removing the provocation of violence in the Orange Order Drumcree mural for example shifts the discursivity of violence, the King Billy mural which replaces it is the very iconophilia which this community has deployed to transform the Battle of the Boyne into a rigid text of protestant ascendancy. The physical significance of violence and the possibility that it has established its own discursive formation thus remains unexamined in the new imagery. This means that the reimaged art-documented murals fail to map the violence in relation to the socio-political context in the way, for example the Garvaghy Road, Portadown murals map the interchange of violence. The importance of these murals that map violence is that the possibilities and potentials that they evoke inversely suggest the possibility of resolving the conflict through reconciliation. But the Action Plan for the improvement of the disadvantaged undermines the vision of cultural justice by mediating an irreducible border of cultural difference.

The recent removal of two UVF murals and other territorial markings in the Springmartin area of West Belfast, identified as a disadvantaged protestant area, includes the landscaping of a disused green space with artwork in the form of three stone columns designed by a professional artist at a cost of £30,890. The new garden of reflection and sculpture highlight the history of the Battle of the Somme. The columns are dedicated to remembering the Battle of the Somme, and acknowledge losses from the surrounding areas of the 36th Ulster Division the 16th and 10th Irish Divisions. Also featured on the columns is a dedication to a local unit the West Belfast Volunteers who fought at the Somme. The Ulster Volunteer Force is interlocked organizationally and historically with the West Belfast Volunteers which recently formed a flute band. We find in these developments a performative celebration of the men and deeds of the Ulster Volunteer Force:

> The West Belfast Volunteers Flute Band was formed in late 2003 by a group of young men from the Highfield, Springmartin and Shankill area's of Loyalist West Belfast in Remembrance of the men of the 36th Ulster Division (Ulster Volunteer Force), Ulster Special Service Force 1912, 9th Battalion

> Royal Irish Rifles 1914-1918, The Shankill Road Boys and The 14th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles (The Young Citizen Volunteers) who gave their All For King, Country and Empire on the Blood Drenched Battlefields across Northern Europe during the Great War of 1914-1918.[10]

Dating back to the early part of the 20th Century the display and commemoration of the Battle of the Somme is associated with the iconophilia of King Billy and the triumphalism of protestant supremacy. But this is not a public memorial and statue commemorating a united nation state. In this and in the other examples referred to the emphasis is placed on aesthetic issues of design, style, conceptualisation, layout, siting, symbology and iconography, that is the *how* of the commemoration rather than the *what*. Much has been written about potential ways of distinguishing between monument and memorial. The most influential and frequently cited attempt at a definition remains that of art historian Arthur Danto, (1987) who declared that triumphalism (celebrating heroes and victories) is characteristic of monuments, whereas a memorial is a solemn precinct honouring the dead. This example and the others such as Drumcree and Tavanagh that I have referred to demonstrate therefore that although the new imagery replaces what might be described as art at war the new imagery comprises a monument to the triumphalism of loyalism-as mimic (in Homi Bahbha's sense).

The effect is screened over with postmodern notions of multiculturalism and respect for diversity. It does not come as a surprise that a Miami artist Xavier Cortada who received sponsorship from the United States Department of State for a programme which supports the International Education Policy issued by President Clinton on April 19, 2000 travelled to Ireland to create what was described as a collaborative mural with and for the people of Northern Ireland. A description of the artist's work is given as follows:

> Mr. Cortada uses a special technique that incorporates participant's actual writings and drawings into his murals. Each person is asked to express himself or herself by writing or drawing on a separate piece of paper. These messages are then glued into three canvas panels around an image designed by Mr. Cortada himself. Through this method, voices are united by common concerns. Every participant is encouraged to write (preferably with permanent ink) or draw a message on one side of a piece of white paper no larger than 3 inches by 4 inches. The messages will focus on how youth have learned to respect or celebrate diversity.[11]

[10] On line at http://www.freewebs.com/thewestbelfastvolunteers/ retrieved 02/12/10
[11] On line at http://www.cortada.com/projects/2000/ireland.htm retrieved 01/10/10

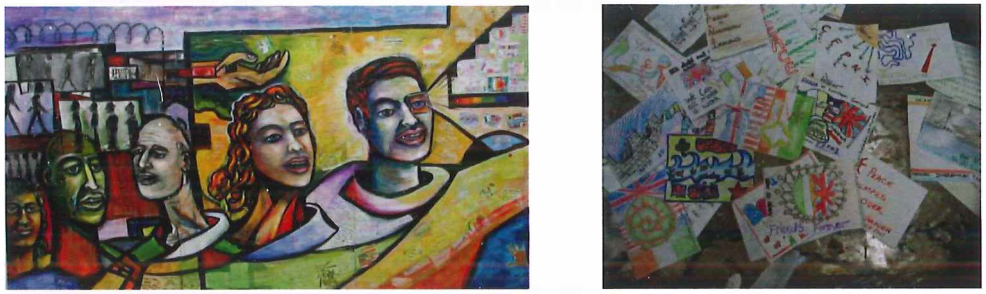

Fig 87 Mural – Reimaging/ Xavier Cortada

The initial situation out of which this work emerges bears no reference to the Northern Ireland context. Its semiotic content is open to synthetic contradiction, a text already written elsewhere, a nowhere land. Its reason apparently is not to generate unforeseen creativity but to reproduce a predefined focus: 'to respect or celebrate diversity'. It is clearly more a case of the community helping the artist and the state funded policy with what they were doing rather than the other way around. The deployment of the messages invests the mural with universal notions such as 'the uniqueness of the individual', 'the healing power of love and peace', 'the rich diversity of humankind', 'the values of Western civilisation', 'the rights of property'. The irony of liberal pragmatism's advocacy of notions such as these will not be missed, particularly when it simultaneously elevates to absolute status values that are clearly relative, and takes for granted in post-modern style that diversity and plurality are always unequivocal goods. If diversity, plurality, flexibility and inclusiveness can indeed be precious values, they are also as Fredric Jameson in *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* has shown us the mantras of a late capitalism (in Jameson's usage) which needs for its own purposes to break down barriers and loosen up old allegiances; and the true pluralists are those who feel the need to say both things together, rather than remain blind to the material basis of their own beliefs. The doctrine that honest doubt is preferable to firm conviction; that firm conviction is always only a heartbeat away from authoritarianism; that the truth generally lies in the middle; that there are no important conflicts in which one side must absolutely win and the other absolutely lose; that a readiness to compromise in the spirit of realism is always to be commended, and that resistance to this counsel is inherently a vice all of these abstract, inflexible, one-sided, grossly generalizing liberal dogmas must surely be thrown open to a genuinely free play of the mind.

Thus we see that Northern Ireland is suddenly ahistorical. Noticeably absent from this historiography is reference to the conflict that has pervaded Irish history from the Tudor invasions of the 16th century to the present which was so aptly contained in the images now being whitewashed. The signage fails to interrogate the causes of conflict but propagandizes the opposite belief that the division is

in the past—that is as if it never occurred. Each of the new murals features a small plaque showing what it replaced, which adds an element of triumphalism to the new mural. In a shift reminiscent of the progress made by the technique of the spectacle theorized by Guy Debord toward modernization and unification, together with all the other tendencies toward the simplification of society, the new Peace Agreement of 1998 is a sort of phenomenon, duly noted and dated and understood: a very simple sign, 'the end of the Troubles'. Repeated over and over again this might well form the basis for a motto for the new Belfast: "On this spot nothing will ever happen – and nothing ever has". Throughout this process of cultural incarceration the spectacle of the new imagery (the referent) reduces substantive issues of policy to mere symbolism under the veil of 'the importance of creativity in all its manifestations and in our lives' (the words of the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Naomi Long referred to above). Here we see organized consent and hegemonic control exercised through the technique (as understood by Foucault) of creativity which is portrayed as more than mere art, but as an inclusive commitment by all of society (all our lives) to a 'creative' renewal.

Implicit in this portrayal of the present as a 'renewal' is the destructive constraint of the past. But modern multicultural identities can be every bit as coercive and constraining as some pre-modern concepts of selfhood. It is evident for instance that the loosening grip of religion in Ireland fails properly to balance the precious gains of this secularization with the loss of a certain spirituality, as the country shifts from comely maidens to hard-faced executives. For some observers true modernization in Ireland would involve completing the process of decolonization. Not all nostalgia is self-indulgent. In some respects, the past was indeed superior to the present, just as in other respects the opposite is the case. Atavists and progressivists are alike tunnel visioned. Walter Benjamin even managed to forge nostalgia into a revolutionary concept, aware that what stirs men and women to revolt are not dreams of liberated grandchildren but memories of oppressed ancestors. The Angel of History is driven backwards into the future with its horror struck gaze fastened on the catastrophe of the past.

It bears mention that the belief that the artist has a special calling, a talent which is necessarily revealed in the artist's created work and which tells a truth transcending the truth of history is a position that has become increasingly old fashioned. Those who remain faithful to this position often are concerned to give their work a social justification, and thus to support their claim to a place inside history. To substantiate their sense of their own art as a form of political action, they at times invoke a romantic Marxism according to which false or bourgeois art, the art of the disintegrated consciousness with no vision of the future is opposed by true art – that is to say, the art of the true artist: the art that emerges from a dialectic between artist and people (between relevance and commitment), an art whose goal it is to transform society and move towards truth. According to this faith, in certain periods of history, during

revolutionary phases for instance, the artist may thus have a subject dictated by the people without having to feel any loss of 'artistic freedom'. During such times the artist responds to the dynamic of what Ernst Fisher calls a "collective consciousness" (Fischer, 1963: p. 47). However, this double discourse in which the artist bears both the role of lone Shelleyan visionary and voice of the people, is tied to the ideological binaries of aestheticism, a hierarchy of high art and popular art, one standard for the true artist, another for the rest; bedevilled by the individual need for self expression, a sacred place where the artist can draw sustenance from a vision of truth, it gains to itself the undesirable attempt to write the art into the era in order to claim an historical lineage of some sort and draw strength from it.

Republican and Loyalist Murals post Peace Agreement

Political developments in Ireland from the late 1960's onwards have been deemed 'postmodern' and 'postnational' in a number of ways. Alex Houen (2002: pp. 242/3) refers to various critics[12] for whom the accession of the UK and the Republic of Ireland to the EEC produced an initial shift towards postmodern power. For McCall it meant that the "sovereignty of the modern nation state could no longer be guaranteed" (Houen, 2002: p. 242). The argument advanced is that regional states (viewed as actors) have become integrated into a web of relationships that overlap regional, national, European and international territorial boundaries, which in turn has contributed to the postmodern condition theorized by Lyotard emerging in Northern Ireland. Within the context of Northern Ireland, it is argued, Lyotard's notion of 'incredulity towards meta-narrative' that is associated with the postmodern has been helped along by the failure of a legitimating narrative of state nationalism and the encroachment of liberalization on sectarian privilege – for example the developments following the demand for civil rights of the 1960's. However, associated with incredulity towards both republican and unionist's state narratives, the tenets of postmodernism have been met with reservations in Northern Ireland. Desmond Bell cited in Houen points out that "Such are the contradictions of Irish modernism that the Irish have prematurely entered the post-modern era ... We are experiencing, for example... 'post-nationalism' with the national question materially unresolved" (Houen, 2002: p. 243)

[12] Such as Richard Kearney, Conor McCarthy and Cathall McCall

For Bill Rolston, postmodernism poses problems for Northern Ireland not as descriptive terms, but as a prescriptive policy:

> All the buzzwords of postmodernism are apparent in the utterances of those associated with the Community relations Council and the Cultural Traditions group – 'tolerance', 'diversity', and of course, the rejection of such essentialist notions as 'the nation'.
>
> — (Cited in Houen, 2002: p. 243)

From this perspective, Houen observes, postmodern policies are available as a strategy to prevent Irish nationalists, for example, from contesting that the regions 'multi-cultural diversity' remains firmly lodged within a UK framework.

Following on the peace accord republican murals have covered such issues as the peace process, sectarian harassment, prisoners, RUC and the British army, memorials, the hunger strike, mythology, history and matters of international interest. Many of these murals contain transitional messages, transitional in the sense that they relate to the immediate issue and level of consciousness but point in a more advanced direction and therefore raise the level of consciousness. For example commentary on constitutional change emerges in a mural depicting a crowd toppling the statue which dominates the avenue approaching Stormont of Lord Carson, the architect of the Northern Ireland state—the message clearly being that republicans have entered the Northern Ireland parliament without supporting the older order of unionist domination, that is to say the Northern Ireland of its first prime minister, James Craig who had once boasted of a 'protestant parliament for a protestant people'. A mural in Dromara Street, 1999 contrasts the promises of the Good Friday Agreement with the reality of ongoing loyalist sectarian harassment and violence. These latter murals document the violent consequences of the Drumcree Orange march on catholic communities, 10 murders, 150 homes petrol bombed, 1350 families forced from their homes and dozens of pipe bomb attacks on these homes all having occurred subsequent to the Good Friday Agreement. Republicans have replaced paramilitary murals with images representing traditional Celtic designs or depicting historical Celtic myths like Fin MacCumhail and Cú Chulainn. The murals also address international issues and affiliations such as zero tolerance to violence against women, racism, (that is issues of political democracy), and affiliations with the political programmes and struggles elsewhere such as Australian aboriginals and the theft of land, the ETA's campaign for Basque independence and the plight of Palestinians under Israeli occupation. This oscillation between a national visuality and a deterritorialised and transcultural form of communication speaks significantly of the discordant dialogue between the particularism and internationalism that bedevils republicanism in

Northern Ireland and its ongoing debate between the socialist revolution and the national democratic revolution. Thus on one side these trends are cognate with the particularism found in identity politics; plus the models of catholic nationalism that stress identity, as opposed to political democracy. These are elements that both the state and other forces are able to draw out and develop into a 'multicultural' form. This also highlights the extent to which republican communities have been absorbed into the official structures of the new Northern Ireland administration to a greater extent than their loyalist neighbours. A key part of the republican argument was always that it was the British state that created and sustained a false division between catholic and protestant and nationalist and unionist in Northern Ireland, using its tried and tested imperialist policy of Divide and Rule. As such, struggling against British rule meant struggling against the forces that were dividing Irish people from each other.

With Sinn Féin members now represented in every aspect of community and local government politics, as well as in the Northern Ireland Assembly, republicans have found themselves implementing British government policies. A mural in Ardoyne Avenue showing a road of skulls leading up to the Stormont assembly with writing—No Return to Stormont Rule; No Internal Settlement and concluding its narrative: We demand nothing less than equality—is an example that may partly reflect the fact that the leaders of the republican movement have been in the forefront of redefining the armed struggle for Irish freedom as a kind of struggle for 'cultural recognition' and 'respect for identity' in a devolved constitutional arrangement that remains governed from Westminster.For unionists though, replacing this framework with that of the Irish Republic is not a solution. Explaining how 'partial' representation rearticulates the whole notion of identity and alienates it from essence, as part of his foundational analysis of colonial discourse and the emergence of 'inappropriate' colonial subjects, Homi Bhabha might have had Northern Ireland in mind when he observed that "the look of surveillance becomes the displacing gaze of the disciplined where the observer becomes the observed" (Bhabha, 1994: p. 89). The effect of mimicry on the colonial discourse is profound and disturbing; its menace being its double vision, which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. Unionism has been adept at mimicry of British culture, the reverend Paisley calling protestant Irish the 'last true Brits', but postmodern identity politics and multiculturalism have diverted this gaze. The reimaging programme fulfils an important function in this process, investing the murals with the notions of mutability and inbetweenness, theorized by Homi Bhabha. As Rolston observes the new murals are an attempt to encourage loyalists to see themselves not so much as British as an ethnic group in a regional state. Loyalism has reluctantly surrendered its mimesis of British culture and has given expression to a singular territoriality – 'what we have we hold' - in their murals, the most common depiction being of masked and armed men in action. For example, Bill Rolston (Rolston, 2003: p. xi) reports of one UVF mural -

Prepared for Peace Ready for War showing armed combatants pointing their automatic weapons at the spectator - which following the ceasefire was destroyed when the building on which it had been painted was demolished, was reprised and immediately recreated on a nearby wall. Most often the symbolism employed is standard British army symbolism.

Fig. 88 Loyalist mural – Ready for Peace / Ready for war

Kevin Bean points out that since the Peace Agreement ruled out fundamental political and constitutional change, political conflict increasingly has taken the form of symbolic battles and 'sham fights around cultural and identity politics such as the Irish language and other expressions of cultural difference'(Bean, 2007: p. 260). He argues that the Provisional movement (Sinn Féin), has proven to be a significant partner for the state in the successful operation and long term stability of the new dispensation not just because it had a strong electoral base but because it was a form of social power that could act as a mediator between the nationalist population and the British State. He argues however that 'narratives of normalization' notwithstanding, the institutional structures of the new dispensation reflect the political and communal divisions that were the basis of the conflict in Northern Ireland (Bean, 2007: p. 260), that is to say that the structuration of the conflict remains intact. These arguments are echoed by a republican activist who during the Troubles painted murals and who now teaches at a London School, Kevin Rooney who draws attention to the political specificity of the murals when he suggests that if the national conflict in Ireland had been truly resolved, then the murals, or Orange marches and other traditions, would probably have simply faded away as time went on.

> Instead the conflict in Ireland has been brought to an end with a peace process that promises to celebrate and maintain respective culture and traditions. What seems clear is that these traditions will be defined from the top down and only official celebrations of a sanitised culture will be allowed to prevail. Twenty years ago I was nearly shot dead by the British Army for painting a slogan on a Belfast wall; now I would be given money by the government to paint on a wall and celebrated for 'expressing my identity' - but only if they liked what I said" [13].

But ownership of the mythification of events may not be a sham fight as suggested by Bean. Several critics, Houen observes, (Houen, 2002: p. 244) have argued that the perceived prevalence of post modern discourse has led many political and paramilitary groups to cling all the more intransigently to religious and political meta-narratives. Thus the Ulster Protestants, particularly the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) claim to have descended from the Pictish 'Cruthin', who it is argued preceded the Gaels as the first inhabitants of Ireland. Both Cu Chulainn, hero of the Gaelic epic *Tain Bo Cuailnge*, and St Patrick, the Irish national Saint, are consequently garnered into the Cruthin heritage and are reflected in murals across Belfast. Some republicans have responded claiming that Irish inhabitants can trace their presence back to the geological division of the island from the European continent. In both instances the meta-narrative about territory is linked to claims about pre-history (ibid). Houen proceeds to point out that Richard Kirkland has argued that mythification in the region has also been applied to history itself whereby contesting narratives such as the litany of dates 1690 (Battle of the Boyne), 1798 (defeat of Wolf Tone's Republican invasion from France), 1916 (Easter uprising and battle of the Somme), are taken as evidence of a mythologized community (ibid).

Political violence, which does not simply arise after the event, might itself play a part in myth making. Rather than turning to myth as a supervention of history, paramilitaries are thus seen to be grounding separatist narratives materially *in* history. Houen argues that acts of violence and terror are able to establish their own discursive formations. Its physical significance and provisionality resist attempts to saturate its discursivity as mere text within the dominant discourse. Examples are the Battle of the Boyne, Battle of the Somme, the Siege of Derry, the Hunger Strike and the Easter uprising of 1916 which can be seen as part of a narrative (Houen, 2002: p. 244). Republican murals have documented these battles: for example in New Lodge Road, Belfast a mural in 1997 portrays Mary Ann and Henry Joy McCracken, heroes of the 1798 rebellion with the writing: The rich always betray the poor', and in Berwick Road, Belfast a mural in 2002 depicts a dying James Connolly and Patrick Pearse in the GPO Easter uprising

[13]Available on the Online forum 'Spiked' www.spiked-online.com/index.php/site/printable/5702/ retrieved 07/03/10.

1916; and in Ardoyne Avenue, Belfast a mural painted in 1996 shows a priest saying mass while watchers warn the congregation of approaching British soldiers under the writing: 'The Mass Rock' Penal Days in Ireland' — which thereby locates nationalist ancestry as a victim of plantation.

These mythifications arising from religious and political narrative such as St Patrick pivot on an axis of contestation with mythification grounded in acts of violence. For example Mark Ervine (the son of David Ervine, the PUP and UDP leader) painted out a mural showing angry military scenes belonging to the UVF (Ulster Volunteer Force) in East Belfast and replaced it with a representation of St Patrick. The painter claimed: "I wanted to point out that St Patrick was just as much a part of Protestant culture as any other culture."[14] But this challenge was as much to the UVF as to republican nationalism. It confronts republican nationalism tactically by poaching its dominant formation—the St Patrick metaphor (in the sense described by De Certeau) but its strategy of encroachment on the paramilitary metaphors of the UVF was unsuccessful. The UVF rejected the appropriation and vandalized the mural. The painting can thus be seen in much the same manner as those produced under the wing of the reimaging programme — as a failure to address the causes of contestation by building blocks of cultural specificity that collide with one another. And the failure of the Mark Ervine painting clearly shows that for activist art to become effective it is not sufficient to question the nature of cultural production only, it is also necessary to question the location, or the means of distribution of that production.

While disagreeing with claims that the project is dictatorial, Morrow concedes that it does amount, '…to a certain extent to using murals as a social engineering tool' (ibid). And it is the discursive formation of this programme as a form of 'Production Art', one which does not reflect but which actively organizes relations of force and power which is echoed in the concerns of many mural painters. Prominent loyalist figures such as David Ervine, the late unionist leader of the UVF aligned Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), remain highly suspicious of the Programme. "This is a case of outsiders trying to dictate how a community is," he said. "It looks to me like censorship, denying that the past ever happened, telling people how to think ... The schemes are dreamt up by civil servants at Stormont who probably live miles away from the nearest mural. They're in complete control as they hold the purse strings, and I'm not sure that the community dialogue is in place. Painters are not informed before the Arts Council makes a decision. They are removing a tradition from the community which bore it".[15] Despite the language of 'inclusion' that now dominates all political discourse in Northern Ireland, it is clear that the old murals are excluded in the re-imaging process and only images acceptable to the authorities will be included. Deirdre Mackel from the Upper Springfield Development Trust in a

[14]On line at http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/features/belfasts-murals-off-the-wall-14764361.html#ixzz0s6vIYvTc retrieved 07/03/09
[15] Ibid.

republican area of West Belfast, where there has also been a concerted effort to replace militaristic murals with cultural ones, lifted the lid on the less empowering side of this project when she confirmed that the mural painters are censored, cannot paint any flags or emblems and have to steer clear of politics.[16] The politicization of the reimaged murals thus remains a boardroom secret.

The programme does not only prescribe what is acceptable – it also draws artists into a crude form of instrumentalism. The mural painter and Republican activist Kevin Rooney recalls that unlike their predecessors, who were unpaid non-professional members of the community and who "spontaneously painted as an expression of their local communities" struggles – these new artists "...are paid to implement a British government agenda which has little to do with art and everything to do with policy. The artists employed by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland may be able to paint a mural, but that's where the similarity with the traditional mural-painting ends."[17]

In this sense the art of the re-imaging project is merely supplementary. Its decorative qualities disguise an external political agenda that is not linked to either of the protagonists, and accordingly it has been invested with a power that informs the spectator how and what to view through a constructed viewing position. This form of domination present in visual culture resonates in the power struggle of dominance which Foucault explores in his discursive analysis of the formation of the subject and disciplinary power. Foucault (1983: p. 212) identifies aspects of struggles as "... those which question the status of the individual ... struggles against the government of individualization ... struggles against the privilege of knowledge ... struggles revolve around the question: Who are we?" In *Discipline and Punish* it is clear that the strength of disciplinary power is the ease of its invasion of the human – this renders the physical violence which may accompany submission unnecessary.

The extent by which the subject is formed by this elusive act of submission to the reimaging project can be measured by the appeal of the Programme's iconography to the nostalgia for cultural security in the wake of thirty or more years of violent conflict which arguably makes it unlikely that the spectator (Unionist or Nationalist) will adopt a critical resistance to the management and governance that constructs this viewing. On the contrary the imagery remains meaningful through recognition and subscription to a discourse in which each community invests a distinctive homogeneous typology of power. But, ironically, it is the same homogeneity which evokes the critical perspective of the spectator to the 'Other's' discourse. The strategy of governance, it thus seems to me is to marginalize what Rooney

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[16] *Backstory: Belfast murals reflect a change of art*, Christian Science Monitor, 14 December 2005.

[17] Available on the On line forum 'Spiked' www.spiked-online.com/index.php/site/printable/5702/ retrieved 07/03/10.

calls 'traditional mural painting'— delegitimize it as a form of extremism and support of war, without aesthetic merit, and replace it with a state funded community mural programme as the true representative of the cultural text; that is the deployment therefore of the mural programme as a cultural form which shows itself to be a political force shaping identity.

This collaboration mirrors the 1998 Good Friday agreement which did not only usher in a new era of Irish-British relations but has had a much more lasting effect in transforming the very language and visual forms through which these relations have been governed internationally. Not only has the republican vocabulary of liberation, end of colonialism, resistance, fighting racism, ending British violence and theft of the land, independence, the right of return, justice and international law been supplanted by new terms like negotiations, agreements, compromise, pragmatism, security assurances, moderation, recognition and identity but Good Friday instituted itself as the language of peace that *ipso facto* delegitimizes any attempt to resist it as one that supports war, and dismisses all opponents of its surrender as opponents of peace. Thus the transformation that Good Friday brought about was not only a transformation of language as such, but also of the republican language and perspective through which the nature of British-Irish relations were viewed by the republican leadership, and that institutionalized instead the British perspective and it's vocabulary as neutral and objective. What Good Friday aimed to do, therefore, was change the very goal of Republican politics from national independence from British colonialism and occupation to one where republicans become fully dependent for their political and national survival on Britain and its economic sponsors in the interest of peace and security for their occupiers. Thus opposing Good Friday makes one a utopian extremist and rejectionist; on the other hand participating in its structure makes one a pragmatist, moderate person working for peace. The most effective ideological weapon that Good Friday has deployed since 1998 is precisely that anyone who opposes the full surrender of Republican national rights is a proponent of war and an opponent of peace. In short, the goal of the Good Friday process is not the establishment of Irish self determination and independence from British occupation, but rather the goal is to end republican independence as a future goal and as a current reality.

The irony will thus not be missed that the Reimaging Programme is ostensibly focused on replacing political art with cultural and community art. These goals materialize visually for example with the mural in Derry that said 'You Are Now Entering Free Derry'. This mural welcomed people into the republican Bogside area of Derry throughout the 1970s and 80s, but has now been given over to the prevailing political concerns of local officials: messages relating to road safety, bullying and littering have been included on this famous gable wall. Last year it was painted pink to mark Gay Pride week. In other words, an iconic image of the Troubles, which expressed the nationalist community's aspiration for

self determination, has transfigured into a Billboard promoting cultural demands of heterogeneity and multiculturalism.

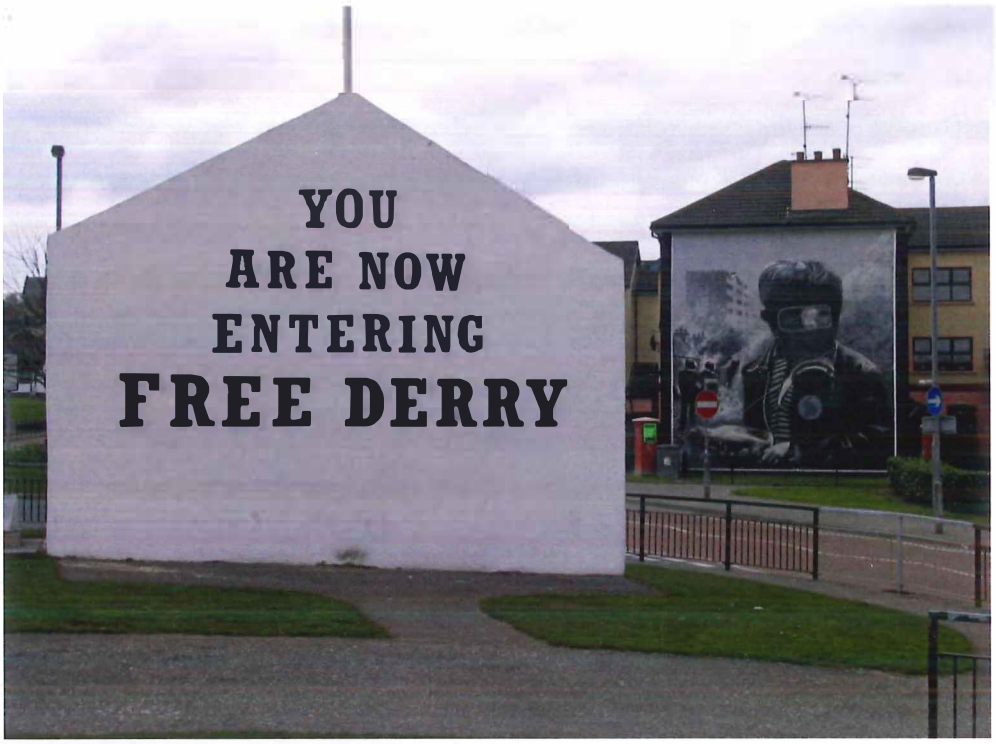


Fig. 89 Free Derry wall / mural – The Petrol Bomber

Fig. 90 Free Derry wall / Gay Pride

In *Free Derry Wall* compiled by Jim Collins and Adrian Kerr, Collins draws attention to the transformed purpose of the wall which originated as a handwritten slogan on the row end of a run down working class terraced estate:

> Get your Free Derry Wall badges, key-rings, fridge magnets, posters, postcards, T-shirts, mirrors, men's hankerchiefs...perhaps a plaster model of the said Wall will satisfy your hunger for Free Derry Wall souvenirs ? Yours for only £6.99. Whatever next, a free Free Derry Wall soft toy with every McChicken Nugget happy meal? Maybe the Bogside Artists ® should paint Free Derry Wall out and replace it with a black-and-white mural of Free Derry Wall and complete the packaging of the past and pacification of the present. After all, the Wall doesn't make much sense if you're imprisoned by slave wages or long-term unemployment. It may as well read You Are Not Entering Free Derry if you happen to be a member of the travelling community, an ethnic minority or, worse still, female. The slogan daubed on a Bogside wall forty years ago has served us well, but what about freedom: social, economic and political? It's time to paint the Wall out as a constant reminder of unfinished business. At the very least, let those who are unseen and unheard scrawl their messages of hope and defiance on this most famed of gables. Failing that, we may as well tumble it. Free the Wall, free our minds.
>
> — Collins and Kerr, 2009: p. 96

The authors cite Trotsky writing from Mexico in 1938 on the self-defeating sabotage of the murals of Diego Rivera:

> Come a little closer and you will clearly see enough gashes and spots made by vandals: Catholics and other reactionaries, including, of course, Stalinists. These cuts and gashes give even greater life to the frescoes. You have before you not simply a 'painting', an object of passive aesthetic contemplation, but a real, living part of the class struggle.
>
> — Collins and Kerr, 2009: p. 76

These observations recall Benjamin's notion that material injury to an original is inscribed into the history of the object. The wall was most alive and appropriately meaningful when it was paint-bombed, pock-marked and chipped at the edges, when its scars left traces on its body, symbol and substance of the here and now subject to time, history and the possibility that it was both the signifier and the signified of a

space of common public concern. But as Eamonn McCann notes: "It presents itself plausibly now to the world, the letters precisely picked out in conventional font, its coat of paint like a Boss suit draped on proletarian shoulders, neat and clean and well-advised, splendidly isolated from the swirl of humanity, the centerpiece of a Department of the Environment traffic management scheme, its setting professionally landscaped" (Collins and Kerr 76: 2009). And Bernadette McAliskey observes: "Such a wall is a testimony to the people's conformity. The people have no gable wall now on which to lean, write and rail against injustice; no chameleon testimony to continuity, universality, complexity of struggle and life; no room for non-conforming creativity. Can the people really have nothing left to say?" (Collins and Kerr 92/3: 2009). [18] Carried forward then into the future is not a utopian vision but a collapsed and disappointed signifier of what was once the focus of future possibility.

Fig. 91 Free Derry performance

[18] Images of the transformation of the Wall are available on line at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/foyle_and_west/8366545.stm retrieved 10/10/2010

Fig. 92 Free Derry wall

Derry is the only remaining walled city intact in Ireland and is one of the oldest continuously inhabited places in Ireland. It was the first planned city in Ireland begun in 1613 with the walls being completed five years later in 1618. Derry, as with cities in general, I suggest came about as projects for the future. People moved from the country into the city to build a future they could shape for themselves. In the case of Derry, Planters organized from London arrived during the 17th Century as part of the plantation of Ulster and built the city of Derry, with walls to protect it from those who did not welcome the occupation. The walls delineated the place where the city was built, which clearly designated its utopian character—that is a search for the ideal city situated outside the forces of nature. The desire to control the future is accompanied by a struggle with the irrationality of the natural order. In his *Discourse on Method* René Descartes already observed that since historically evolved cities were not entirely immune to the irrationality of the natural order, they would need to be demolished if a new, rational and consummate city were to be erected on the vacated site (Descartes, 2003: pp. 9ff). This suggests that the notion of a totally controllable, rational and transparent environment manifests a perpetual transformation of the realms of urban life, a process of surpassing and destroying itself. This conflict is evident in Derry, which built as a haven of security soon became the stage for instability, insurrection and violence.

Boris Groys suggests that the modern city presents itself as a blend of utopia and dystopia, whereby "modernity undoubtedly cherishes its dystopian rather than its utopian aspects" – where permission is constantly given to raze the city to the ground in a tireless endeavour to clear a space for what is to happen next, for future development (Groys, 2008: p. 102). But because the demolition is never

complete, the final solution is in perpetual postponement. In modern times this utopian impulse has been replaced by the fascination with tourism. The drive to rebuild has been supplanted by tourism – in search of what is missing at home. This view is echoed in Dean MacCannell's exploratory work on tourism who argues that it is a misunderstanding of the quality of culture to suggest the possibility of consensus. "To suggest that culture rests on consensus reveals a profound misunderstanding of culture and society. Social structure is differentiation." (MacCannell, 1999: p. 25). He argues that all cultures are a "series of models of life ... organized in multiples ... similitude, opposition, contradiction, complement, parallel, analogy "(ibid). And it is what he calls cultural productions which articulate this differentiation, which while dominating the other in modern society is at the "heart of the process called modernization or economic development and cultural change". It is thus that modern international mass tourism produces in the minds of the tourists juxtapositions of elements from historically separated cultures and thereby speeds up the differentiation and modernization of the middle class consciousness" Groys is quite right therefore to suggest that the tourist is in search of cultural differences and local identities which is a gaze conservatively directed at past provenance not the future. The tourist is unable to keep track of a city's historical transformations or to perceive the utopian ideals propelling the city into the future. It therefore transforms temporariness into permanence, the ephemeral into the monumental, that is to say that it abolishes the ideal precisely by giving the impression of it having been fulfilled.

It is not surprising therefore that tourists to Northern Ireland since the end of the Troubles often head straight for the very images that the authorities are now keen to remove in search of cultural differences and local identities wishing the streets of Northern Ireland to be and stay as they ought to be, to be invested with that mix of utopia and dystopia, danger and haunting eeriness. Jarman argues that for most people the images of murals that are available for consumption were (and are) mediated by professionals. Most people only see representations of the murals rather than the paintings themselves; and while the paintings are used in newspapers and on television to imply danger or a threat of violence, the images themselves are clearly also intriguing and attractive. The murals therefore have a tourist potential in a way that localised features of many war zones do. The paintings have had a seductive effect on many consumers who recognise them as a significant feature of the local culture of war. Viewing the murals for oneself seems to offer the opportunity to gain a personal and safe insight into what is otherwise often a confusing and dangerous situation. Part of that understanding in turn derives from the ability to see the paintings *in situ,* and therefore in context (Jarman, 1998).

When visiting Derry, Belfast it is the paramilitary murals conveying violent imagery which imbue a sense of dignified aura, of monumentality – as though that is how things always used to be here and that's how they will stay – all these colourful types, the picturesque ruins and danger looming at every

corner; it is the tourist who wishes to instil a sense of permanence into the murals – in both loyalist and Irish republican areas—an all together different audience whose expectations conflict with those of the domestic population. But these murals were created spontaneously by talented young people to express their defiance, commemorate their dead heroes, celebrate their victories, or to mark out their territories — historical transformations of which the tourist cannot keep track. Thus the Reimaging Programme and the Rebranding of Belfast is greeted with disappointment by tourists thinking here is a slice of unique life that is being destroyed and rendered banal. But it is precisely the prescriptions of tolerance, diversity, multi-cultural diversity and of course, the rejection of the notion of a 'nation' that enables the reimaging programme to feed off these elements of tourism and thereby coordinate differentiation into a single ideology by giving the impression that the differences in Northern Ireland have been overcome and fulfilled.

However the rigid distinction between the world traveler and a locally based, sedentary population is rapidly disappearing. Belfast, Derry and Northern Ireland are not waiting for the tourist to arrive. They too are starting to join the global circulation. Derry has been declared the UK's Culture City for 2013 and the new Belfast comes in six colours: blue, grey, maroon, fuchsia, lime and aqua. Less controversial than the London 2012 Olympics logo, the new logo for Belfast city has none the less generated acres of media coverage and comment. The result of a 12-month 'rebranding' exercise by a London advertising agency, the heart-shaped design doubles as the letter B, allowing for a series of promotional slogans: 'B here now', 'B vibrant' and 'B dynamic'. Strikingly, the lack of any tinges of orange and green – the colours of Ulster Protestantism and Irish republicanism – reinforce the fact that this is the *New* Belfast, a city which will resemble any other and is beginning to homogenize. But the political and cultural differences have not disappeared. In many ways there is a new Belfast. The vibrant, dynamic, happening city represented in the new logo is to some extent a reality in the city centre, where regular visitors are struck by the thriving new restaurant scene, nightlife, new buildings and glossy shopping malls. Central Belfast is taking its place alongside other European cities. It was here in the shiny new city centre that the reimaged Orange Order parades renamed 'Orangefest' could take place, applauded by foreign tourists and introduced by First Minister Peter Robinson as an inter cultural community festival.

However, scarcely reported in the British media, there were riots between Catholic and Protestant youths in several parts of the city; police reported being called out to 49 'incidents' related to the 12 July bonfires. Petrol bombs were thrown and hospital injuries and arrests were in double figures. The violence should not have come as a surprise to those prepared to look beyond the glossy PR and political rhetoric. Numerous loyalist websites have attacked the rebranding of their traditional anti-Catholic activities and

pledged to have nothing to do with the 'sanitised' version of 12 July. At one of the parades in Ballyclare, Stephen Dickinson, former Deputy Grandmaster of the Orange Order, spoke for many loyalists when he said: "I notice that (some Unionist leaders) have been saying in recent days that we're all about cultural tourism. This is about Protestantism, this is about Britishness. It's not about cultural tourism." Drew Nelson, the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge and head of the Orange Order argued that tourists want to see blood-and-thunder bands and Orangemen in traditional dress rather than a diluted, politically correct Twelfth of July demonstration, and claimed that research by both Tourism Ireland and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board showed that visitors to the North for the Twelfth wanted to see 'the real thing.' According to Nelson, while others have suggested the Twelfth be remodelled into a more carnival type event, like the St Patrick's Day parade in Dublin, the Order had to ensure that the day was not turned into a modern, meaningless civic event with more floats than Orange lodges. 'Of course, everyone wants the parade to be more varied and interesting but it should not be repackaged so much that it loses its raw edge. A balance must be maintained. The Twelfth must retain its uniqueness and not become just another civic event.'[19]

But what is cultural tourism? These objections to the rebranding project clearly show that this is an issue that affects an ideological battle in Northern Ireland centred on identity and self determination. A basic question which needs to be addressed is: What is culture? Raymond Williams (1983) identified culture as one of the most complicated words in the English language, which of course makes cultural tourism all the more difficult to define. Greg Richards, in his perceptive research on cultural tourism, (2001) points out that Rásky observes that culture has taken on a growing range of responsibilities, that is to say that "culture has to a certain extent made itself unrecognizable because as an inflationary and inflated concept it has assumed immeasurable dimensions" (cited in Richards, p.7). Richards comments that the same trend of inflated meanings can be identified in the word 'culture' in relation to tourism. However, as a method of understanding, distinguishing cultural tourism from other forms of tourism is useful. Richards proposes that such a distinction is to be found in what he calls the 'learning function'. "Cultural tourists can learn about the culture of a destination and gain new experiences related to that culture in a number of ways, depending on the forms of culture they consume" (Richards 2001: p. 7). He supports the arguments of Littrell (cited in Richards 2001, p.7) that culture can be viewed as comprising what people think (attitudes, beliefs, ideas and values), what people do (normative behavior patterns, or way of life) and what people make (artworks, artefacts, cultural products).

[19] Suzanne Breen Sunday Tribune 6 July, 2008.

> Looking at culture this way cultural tourism is not just about visiting sites and monuments ...but it also involves consuming the way of life of the areas visited. Cultural tourism therefore covers not just the consumption of the cultural products of the past but also the contemporary culture or 'the way of life' of a people or region.
>
> — Richards, 2001: p. 7

He points out that the problem of the globalized cultural competition between cities has led to a shift in emphasis from consumption-led to production-led strategies. In particular the creative industries are being promoted as a vital underpinning for the cultural development of urban areas. Thus creative activities concentrated in major urban areas, including film, fashion, music, publishing visual and performing arts and new media can act as a catalyst not only for economic activity and jobs, but also to revitalize the cultural life of the city itself. Such strategies have led to what Van Elderen (cited in Richards 2001, p. 12) has termed the festivalization of towns and cities in Europe, or "the (temporary) transformation of the town into a specific symbolic space in which the utilization of the public domain ... is under the spell of a particular cultural consumption pattern."

The reimaging and rebranding programmes clearly strategize a 'cultural consumption pattern' as a means of collapsing the political projects of the community with cultural demands. The language of political discussion has shifted from concepts of power, authority and legitimation to the area of culture and identity resulting in parity of esteem being privileged over self determination. However the stress on 'identity' evident in these programmes alters the perception of the conflict to that of cultural recognition rather than one of self determination. This is I suggest a conservative politics based on the rejection of forms of politics which promote transcending existing categories of identity and tradition. The politics of identity and of two traditions continues to underpin the Orange march and the new murals. When Stephen Dickinson distinguishes the march from cultural tourism: "This is about Protestantism, this is about Britishness. It's not about cultural tourism," (ibid) it is the political project of protestant ascendancy that he references. The conversion of Northern Ireland into a nation state with a sense of its own selfhood is accordingly problemetized by unresolved political issues and unlike many cultures in which local features have expanded globally the Northern Ireland communities are contained in a fractured notion of nationality – a broken polity.

The Peace Lines

Following upon their arrival in 1969 the British troops constructed sand banks along lines separating Catholic and Protestant residential areas in west Belfast and areas of Derry and elsewhere. With time the sand banks were replaced with brick walls. In 1994 when the cease fire was declared there were 26 of these barriers (euphemistically named 'peace lines') in Greater Belfast. According to a report by the Community Relations Council (CRC) in Northern Ireland[20] this number has trebled since the IRA and Loyalist ceasefires to a total at present of 80 permanent walls. Metal sheeting, often topped with wire fencing has been used to raise their height sometimes to a height well over 10 metres. The walls have been strategically located to weave in and out of the Catholic and Protestant dormitories in the manner of a maze, often penetrating the estates immediately up against resident's homes. They are armed with surveillance equipment aimed at the homes and surrounding areas. [21]

Housing redevelopments and relocations have been framed around these barriers. In addition to the walls motorways have been strategically rerouted to form a division between the city centre and these residential areas, particularly that of West Belfast; 'peace walls' on one edge of enlarged streets form a bulwark in residential areas. Solid metal gates prevent the flow of traffic along streets which cross protestant and catholic areas. This positioning of the city's contours forms a confusing labyrinth and has contributed to a sterile and antagonistic environment. An example of this phenomenon is evident from the redevelopment of the terraced estate which stood in the Protestant Shankill area on the northern side of Cupar Street which separates the Shankill from the Clonard Catholic neighbourhood on the south side of the street. The Protestant estate had been abandoned and became derelict before the cease fire. Every roof had caved in, the windows and doors were filled with cement. However rather than creating an open green area the authorities upgraded Cupar Street and constructed a ten metre peace line of cement and metal fencing on the south side of the street abutting the Catholic Clonard estate. The only opening in the Cupar Street peace line was established at Lanark Way where security forces control the metal access gates. The derelict estate was demolished and a new neighbourhood constructed in the Protestant area some distance back from the street. The new neighbourhood which is now located behind a two metre

[20] www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/.../peace-walls-belfast-ceasefire.

[21] Duncan Morrow, the Community Relations Council's chief executive officer, estimated that it might take 10 or 20 years before any of the walls come down. "The walls went up because people didn't feel safe, and the tragedy is that once they are up people hardly imagine feeling safe without them. So we do have a big issue about not just taking walls down but how to make people feel safe after all that we went through," he said.

metal railing fence faces towards the street and the ten metre peace line. The far side of the peace line backs right up against the homes in Bombay Street in the Clonard Catholic neighbourhood which is the site of the Clonard Memorial and Bombay Street mural which, as described above engages with the violent events of August 1969 that occurred in the street and elsewhere in Belfast. Metal grids cover the distance between the wall and the roofs of these homes. Shankill residents have painted images on their side of the peace line; these include reproductions of traditional brick houses, paintings of Lord Carson, who led resistance to Irish Home Rule, and emblems of the protestant paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) formed in 1966. Testimonials to those who died at the Somme during the First World War and pictures of Orangemen are shown. In May 2009 the Re-Imaging Communities programme funded art work on the Shankill side of the peace line at Bryson Street in the Short Strand where ceramic mosaics and paintings of children at play were unveiled.

The peace lines can thus be seen to reinforce cultural fault lines in which the landscape has come to embody a manuscript of cultural memory. The juxtaposition of the emblems of the paramilitary UVF painted by the community of its own accord with state sanctioned images of children playing illustrates the fundamentalism that conjoins domestic peace with violence and the enforced nature of the separation of the communities. Although the cease fire and subsequent peace agreement have put a halt to paramilitary violence, an apparently banal military emblem must be read against the background of its formation. It was the loyalist paramilitary organisation formed in 1966, the UVF which launched the attack on Bombay Street in 1969—the street that is located on the far side of the wall—and which vowed to destroy Irish republicanism and warned off 'speeches of appeasement: Sarah Nelson notes the following statement in her investigation of loyalism: 'From this day, (21 May 1966) we declare war against the IRA and its splinter groups. Known IRA men will be executed mercilessly and without hesitation . . . we solemnly warn the authorities to make no more speeches of appeasement. We are heavily armed Protestants dedicated to this cause' (Nelson, 1984: p. 61).

But despite the cease fires, sectarian violence is common. More than 15 years after the main paramilitary ceasefires, the security forces are still dealing with the threat of violence almost daily, responding to more than 400 security alerts involving viable devices in the past two years. In the first six months of 2009 for example there were finds of more than 130 dissident bombs, weapons and ammunition. British army bomb disposal experts dealt with 724 real and hoax bomb alerts since July 2007 – an average of 30 every month. More than 420 incidents are regarded as having had the potential to kill or seriously injure. A key dissident tactic has been the use of hoax bomb alerts with 302 false alerts during the last two years. In March 2009 bomb experts were called to 79 alerts. Although 51 of these proved to be hoaxes, 28 involved viable devices. That same month dissident republicans shot dead two

soldiers and a police officer. The *Irish News* of the 28th July, 2009 reported that Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde said that the threat posed by dissident republicans was the highest since he had taken up his post. County Fermanagh has been a key target for dissidents. Dissident republicans were blamed for planting a roadside bomb near Wattlebridge in October last year. In April a major security operation was launched after telephone calls purporting to be from the Real IRA claimed that devices had been abandoned along the border. Fears that dissidents have moved into a new and more focused phase of attack were heightened in early 2010 when a 300lb car bomb was discovered at Castlewellan, Co Down. The Real IRA targeted police officers several times. Officer Ryan Crozier escaped death when a booby-trap bomb exploded under his car close to Castlederg as he drove to work at Enniskillen police station. In June two officers escaped injury when a landmine packed into creamery cans partially exploded as they passed it in Roslea, Co Fermanagh. The violence is not confined to dissident political groups. Barely reported riots between Catholic and Protestant youths in several parts of the city continue on an almost daily basis and escalate during the marching season into open confrontation. In 2009 police reported being called out to 49 incidents related to the 12 July bonfires. Petrol bombs were thrown and hospital injuries and arrests were in double figures.

The possibility of developing a common cultural heritage is further undermined by the cultural fragmentation that is fore grounded by the rebranding policies of the Re-Imaging Communities programme which nails down cultural specificity to that of tolerance rather than opening it up to intercultural exchange. This would suggest that postmodern state policies will gain hold and override cultural memory which with a consequential loss of cultural skills in reading it is in danger of becoming forgotten.

However, it is not postmodernism which has eroded culture here but the staunch opposition to any cultural diversity that has done so. The UVF military symbolism painted alongside the state sanctioned mosaics and imagery on the wall fronting Bombay Street clearly undermines the official policy of 'appeasement'. As Kevin Rooney puts it:

> Growing up near the peace line that divides Catholics and Protestants in West Belfast, it was always a good idea to know every word of either the Hail Mary or the Sash in case you were challenged as to your religion. Twenty years on this kind of back ward sectarian division is now being celebrated by all sides. They may not be reciting the Rosary or singing the Sash, but by standing up in the new Assembly and designating themselves as part of one tradition or the other, they may as well be.[22]

[22] Kevin Rooney *FORTNIGHT JUNE 1998.*

Rather than reconciling in a shared future, the peace lines leave the communities to stand alongside and in contrast to each other. Separation has produced a separation from culture and turned the city into a maze of fundamentalism to which the relativist claims of postmodernism about territoriality, culture and terrorism do not stand up. Nor do they stand up to the physical impact of violence that has bred so successfully in this environment. The postmodern condition here is qualified by the 'geopolitical'. The provisionality is not a generalized disintegration of cultural borders and identities but it is a specific state of socio political power. Whereas once the murals offered a way of mapping the political violence in relation to its socio-political context, the peace lines now do so. This is not a move towards abstraction, for the naming and coding of the city is also linked to powers of surveillance. Whereas on the one hand the streets and walls have their own material potential, on the other security forces use virtual surveillance technology, cameras and helicopters to monitor the possibility of violence. Both the walls and the observation technology are thus deployed to control the shape of events. Counter-terrorism here means securing a dominance of the virtual over the material, that is to say the possibility of violence versus the containing surveillance of the security forces. Yet they are ontologically distinct and retain their own potentials.

The Peace Line is the New Mural

In their inquiry reflecting on three decades of formal investigation and public inquiry in the North of Ireland *In the Full Glare of English Politics: Ireland, Inquiries and the British State*, Bill Rolston and Phil Scraton focus particularly on the use and abuse of state power, the reproduction of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses and the processes through which they gain or are denied legitimacy. The authors commence their inquiry by drawing attention to Michel Foucault's assertions concerning truth:

> . . . is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is

> sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.
>
> — (Foucault 1980: 131 cited in Rolston and Scraton 2005: p. 550).

The authors propose that for Foucault, truth cannot be conceived 'outside power' or 'lacking in power'. Citing Foucault they note that it is not 'the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves'. For, while there is a 'battle "for truth"' (Foucault 1980: p. 132), there is a pre-eminent 'political economy' of truth 'characterised by five important traits'. Truth 'is centred on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it; it is subject to constant economic and political incitement . . . ; it is the object, under diverse forms, of immense diffusion and consumption . . . ; it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses . . . ; it is the issue of whole political debate and social confrontation' (Foucault 1980: pp. 131–2). Observing that Foucault's early writings on truth and official discourse were criticized as over-deterministic, reducing 'truth' solely to the expression of institutional power so that if 'free spirits' and independent thinking could not produce alternative truths, what constituted the foundations of dissent, opposition and resistance? But, they argue recognizing that 'truth' is not confined to imposition 'from above', i.e. it is not the prerogative of defining institutions and it carries multiple expressions in the micro and immediate worlds of social action, interaction and reaction, does not invalidate the proposition that the state has the capacity to impose its régime of truth on its citizens, particularly in those sites of intervention where state authority and political legitimacy are challenged. They support the argument of Nils Christie (1981: p. 13) who notes that the state establishes a 'shield of words' as an effective 'means of disguising the character' of its activities. Within the criminal justice process, for example, the 'person to be punished' becomes a 'client', the 'prisoner' becomes an 'inmate', a 'cell' becomes a 'room' and 'solitary confinement' becomes 'single-room treatment' (Christie 1981). What this achieves is the recasting of 'crime control' as a 'clean, hygienic operation' and the eradication of 'pain and suffering from the text-books and from the applied labels'. Yet, for the 'experience of those suffering . . . they are just as they used to be: scared, ashamed, unhappy' (Christie 1981). Despite reconstructed vocabularies, the marginalization and exclusion, the reality of 'otherness' is painful and brutalizing.

This understanding of the brutality that power successfully conceals is supported by Stan Cohen, who argues that hidden from view the 'power to classify . . . the purest of all deposits of professionalism' (Cohen 1985: p. 196) remains intact, reinforced by its central location within the modern state. But the power enjoyed by professional definers who politically manage the personal and social consequences of

structural inequalities is not only the power to restrict or to negate. As Cohen (1985) states, it is 'a form of creation'. He is supported by Foucault whom he cites: '. . . the exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information' (Cohen 1985). Essential to Foucault's thesis on power is his emphasis on the productivity of its existence in modernity. . "We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of modern power in negative terms: it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'- In fact power produces reality " (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 1977: p. 194). Knowledge too is produced in this system whereby entire bodies of information, in the form of discourses are formed (Foucault, *Power and Knowledge*, 1980: p. 51). A system of power relations thus becomes intelligible in the techniques through which it is exercised. Thus while accepting the diversity and relativity of power within personal and inter/intra-community relations, the administration of state power through its preferred professional agencies is profound and determining. Whatever the rhetoric of consent in advanced democratic societies, the reality of control dominates the lives of those who live on or close to the political and economic margins. In its diverse forms, official discourse, 'modes of argument that proclaim the state's legal and administrative rationality' (Burton and Carlen 1979: p. 48), is central to the administration of state power, the proclamation of political legitimacy and the imposition of formal authority.

The Peace Lines constitute a series of stockades that materially support the disbursement of this formal authority, this 'institutional truth'. Unlike murals which bring a form of resistance to walls, the Peace lines invite the community's cooperative hegemonic legitimacy of the prevailing political authority. They have in a sense become a 'people's forum' – a site of voluntary control which is held in private by the communities on either side of the wall. A code precluding the formation of a collective identity is written into the discourse inasmuch as its conflictual structure invites the community on each side to contest the other through asserting its own. Rather than reconciling political and religious differences, then the walls leave them to stand alongside and in contrast to each other.

Institutional devolution has resulted in a textbook integration of Northern Ireland into mainstream thought about British politics which now discuss common issues in terms of the UK's territorial diversity. As Professor Roy Foster noted, "the dominant theme of Irish history in the last thirty years has been the cementing of partitionism and the institutionalising of twenty-six-county nationalism. At the beginning of the 21st century Northern Ireland is just as firmly entrenched in the UK (maybe more so, in fact) and Ireland as far away from reunification"(reported in *Irish News*, 5 July 2010). With self determination no longer on the warpath, the Catholic/republican side of the wall remembers its defeat; Unionism on its side celebrates its victory. The materiality of the Peace lines and the modes of mural expression are two

distinct but mutually affecting variables, that is to say that materiality and the murals each have their own performative variables which are open to being affected by those of the other.

Fig. 93 Peace Line – Belfast West (1)

Fig. 94 Peace Line – Belfast West (2)

Notes

[i]Instances of the many projects are: The ethnic cleansing mural at Hopewell Crescent, showing burning homes, a gallows with four hanging corpses, and figures in the foreground engaged in hand to hand combat and dragging a body from a white horse with the writing: 'The persecution of the Protestant people by the Church of Rome 1600 - The ethnic cleansing still goes on today' has been replaced with a human rights declaration: 'Sustainable employment required for all'; Three badges in Percy Place and Wigton Street, replaced with images of the Belfast Blitz and enlistment; The Siege of Derry in Hopewell Crescent, replaced with images of local boxing legends; `Can It Change`, a mural showing scenes of violence, bombs having gone off, burning homes with news reports of people fleeing their homes following Republican attacks, also in Hopewell Crescent, replaced with one about children`s right to play; A mural of Martin Luther has been painted on a previously blank wall in Shankill Parade.

Fig. 95 Reimaged mural (1)

Fig. 96 Reimaged mural (2)

CONCLUSION

He was a bad scribe because in reality he was 'remaking' the text
— Antonio Gramsci

Contrary to the rhetoric of diversity, inclusiveness, and liberation of personal taste, the new Northern Ireland is in fact wholly the product of centralized planning. On a material level we have seen how the peace lines have reconstructed the boundaries of cultural confrontation. An alternative way of reading the new Northern Ireland is accordingly to see it as a physical plan in which structural reconfigurations have located different cultural performative actions at cross angles from one another. These cultural performatives are themselves constructed on the central core of the Action Plans prescribed by the new law of the Good Friday agreement. This is illustrated by the examples of the multicultural mural paintings, the 'mardi gras' aesthetic themetization of the marching season, the new language of the debate and the designation of Derry as the next European city of culture. This return to popular taste and aesthetic pluralism is a state sponsored *mise-en scene*, a controlled pluralism.

The political objective is undeniably to construct a Northern Ireland cultural identity as the nearest possible replica of the framing discourse of the United Kingdom that can be easily inscribed in the new capitalist international order. The symbolic referent for this replica is not a monument or material structure or painting, but rather the abstracted notion of the fairness of British justice. The basic strategy of this ideology can be said to operate in the following manner: If the United Kingdom has already managed to unite all contradictions under the sheltering roof of its own thinking, what could be the point of partisanly advocating just one of these contrary positions? Hence underlying the heterogeneity of multiculturalism, the plurality of the individual artistic mural projects throughout the city is an invisible hand censoring and combining these projects according to its own vision of the ideologically appropriate mix. Here we find the internal space of power hidden behind the diversity of aesthetic forms.

Power has similarly infused the form and content of the Early Bourgeois mural. But in this case the symbolic referent is the monumental panorama and the mural which presents as an iconic sign. The signifier that drives this political commodification is 'Die Wende' which marks the complete change from Socialist rule and a centrally planned economy in East Germany to the process of German reunification, parliamentary democracy and market economy.

The political background of both instantiations is similar in many respects: both emerge in partitioned and occupied geographies and both bear the consequence of violence. Their vast difference in

form alone is a compelling reason for an enquiry designed to track down similarities and differences in meaning production that may or may not be present. On one level the vast difference in form of each exemplar may be attributed to the historical art practice of each nation. The German mural speaks in a German medium – it is realistic in the sense that it embodies a Germanic painting tradition. I have argued that it is an academic realisation of the thematic material and a desire to incorporate the Reformation as a historical narrative peculiar to East Germany. The 'oddity' of the medium in the contemporary period can reasonably only be explained as an extension of the aspect of the socialist realism paradigm that articulates the reincorporation of traditional form in a manner that as far as the dominant authority is concerned will benefit the people. In this context I emphasize the prerogatives issued by the politburo and the egoism of Tübke in the formulation of the plan for the Early Bourgeois mural. I argue that this is relevant in order to reveal the intended representational form of the mural.

By contrast, the murals in the north of Ireland although at first containing elements of the art tradition of Williamite imagery in the King Billy murals, have manifested in a form coincidental to street performativity and agitprop. However, the form of these instantiations, as I have argued is relevant to politically motivated art only insofar as their image production provides exemplars of the infinite variety of images that emerge in such art. I argue however that it is not in their form, nor necessarily in their content that meaning emerges but that meaning in these instantiations resides in the provisionality of the political, economic and cultural forces of production. I also argue that interpretation, mediation and political commodification overlay this initial source of meaning. In this way the mural is exposed as those determinations that fail to show its meaning – the promise of meaning emerging in the indeterminacy of its production.

These forces of production are rapidly submerged in layers of interpretation. In this regard a comparative study deploying Algirdas Greimas's semiotic square of contradictions and implications necessarily shifts the focus from the specificity of each to a framework exploring the possibilities of meaning that each is able to offer. For example the Drumcree mural painted as a celebration of the Orange Order march and a statement of protestant ascendancy shows us that it is linked to a series of performative discourses. In response to the physical marching that the mural references, counter murals appear and a discourse of indetermination and violence accompanies it. The murals are inextricably linked to this series of indeterminate performative discourses. By way of contradiction a visitor surveys the violence depicted in the Early Bourgeois mural from the comfort of the gallery. The level of security offered by the symbolism of this mural however is undermined by the transient signifier and shifting revelations of allegorical content; in turn this indeterminacy is contradicted and implicated by the forceful intentions conveyed in the Drumcree series of murals and by turn the mural that decries the effect of

tradition in Drumcree is implicated in the academic illustration of the formation of tradition that emerges in the Early Bourgeois mural. These semiotic shifts operate between the representational art of both sets of murals and the political and cultural performativity of each. When taken to one another, the art transmutes into a political and cultural act. Thus the art of the Early Bourgeois mural becomes answerable to the violence inhering in the Northern Ireland murals to the extent that the lived political act naturalizes or repatriates art. To the extent that the art naturalizes the political act, the Northern Ireland murals are answerable to the early Bourgeois mural. As many theorists who have employed Greimas's square, including James Clifford *The Predicament of Culture* (2002) and Frederic Jameson (*The Political Unconscious, 1981*) have demonstrated, there is room for extensive negotiation and debate on the precise positioning of each element. The square moves beyond the Saussarean concept of signification to propose a more complex play of semiotic engagement, which Jameson uses to show the 'limits of a specific ideological consciousness' (p. 47. 1981). This means that the panorama museum can never accommodate or appropriate the performativity of the Northern Ireland Street murals, but neither can it ignore them. As an ideological consciousness it becomes disturbed, implicated in the nexus of numerous relationships. Of course, neither can the lived experience of the Northern Ireland murals ignore semiotic engagement with the art of the Early Bourgeois mural.

I argue that the contextual specificities of each instantiation do not provide us with an assurance of decidability of meaning of the political mural. This is because the context of each has the potential to return us to the conventional value system of each as the measure of insight. The unifying principle behind the analysis of the two instantiations, therefore, resides in an analysis that brings the one to the other as an aid to tracking down their discursive and relational values. These values present as exemplars of the possibilities of meaning that the modern political mural is capable of expressing.

This comparative study thus necessarily exposes those layers of interpretation as a way of unveiling the promise of meaning that resides in the provisionality of the forces of production. Of course these murals have not been produced for the market and hence they have not been produced with market prerogatives in mind. However, commodification in both its political and market oriented forms drives the reimaged Ireland murals and the Early Bourgeois mural, and through means of tourism at least, swamps those murals predating the Peace Agreement that are extant. I argue that the effect of market commodification is a necessary adjunct to my argument because it emphasizes the heterogeneity and difference that drives the market economy; it is this effect that infuses the interpretations ascribed to the murals in the present time. This for example aids in understanding the transition from East Germany of the iconic sign of the mural to it as an iconic sign of united Germany. It also helps us to understand the replacement of the signifier of conflict in Ireland with the signifier of British justice in Ireland.

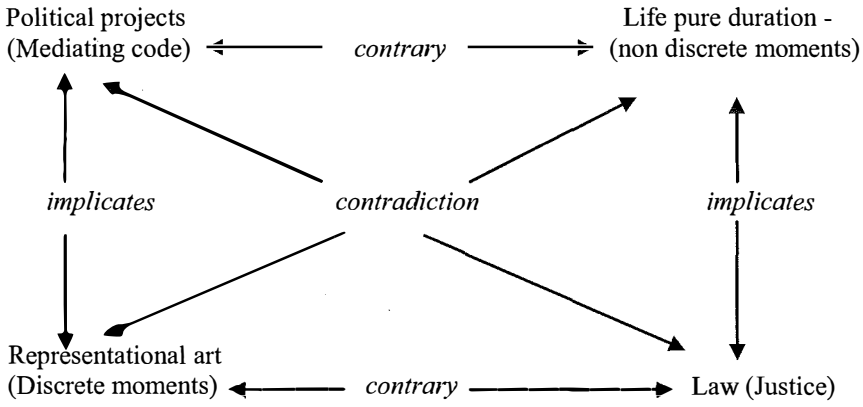
That power is able to infuse aesthetic forms may be explained as follows: It can be demonstrated that traditionally contemplative, 'fine' art was not concerned with reality but with images of reality. Applied art on the other hand concerned itself with building and composing the things of reality. Of course this distinction draws on a paradoxical logic which is nowhere better expressed than by Oscar Wilde.

> We can forgive a man for making a useful thing as long as he does not admire it. The only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it intensely. All art is quite useless. (The Portrait of Dorian Gray)

In this way the paradoxical logic draws out a key cultural assumption – in this case, the presumed connection between utility and value, especially with regard to art. Wilde glosses the seemingly obvious truth that what is 'useful' would also have more value than what is 'useless.' His apparently self-defeating defense, that 'all art is quite useless,' in fact, both articulates a long-standing bias—at least since Plato—that art is not socially or morally 'useful' and thus not valuable (or conversely, that it is useful, but only to the extent that it *does* serve society or morality) and turns it on its head. In the process, Wilde dislocates utility and value, makes them opposites, and then reorders them, so that what is 'useful' becomes, paradoxically, what is *not* to be 'admire[d].' Hence, the word 'useless' becomes a kind of portmanteau in which we may read a long history of aesthetic theory. His paradox glosses at once Plato's banishment of poetry from the republic, Kant's description of the aesthetic object's 'purposive purposelessness,' the 'intense' aesthetic admiration advocated by the Aesthetic movement's early founder, Walter Pater. This insistence on the separation between art and life, and the claim for art's priority in that pairing, not only dwells on the history of aesthetic theory but points significantly to questions of aesthetic representation and reception that span the history of critical discourse from the classical age to the present. Science too has both an applied and a theoretical dimension; but science has wanted to make the images of reality that it creates as transparent as possible in order to judge reality itself on the basis of those images. The difference between theoretical science and art however is that art has taken as its theme its own materiality, the obscurity and therefore the autonomy of images and the resulting inability of these images to adequately reproduce reality. Thus, the deployment of artistic images, from the 'fantastic', the 'unrealistic' from the Surrealistic through to the abstract and images even in media such as photography and film that are usually thought of as reproducing reality faithfully, are intended to thematize the gap between art and reality.

However, a signifying system based on the discourse of the individual and engendered modalities of creation, one in which it invents and combines concepts which articulate problems neither of which are external to it, existing on its own immanent plane, fails to acknowledge the layers of meanings deriving from textual and visual attributions and appropriations. By establishing itself on the autonomy of the signifier, 'Pure' art puts the subject of representation in crisis and inures itself to mediating codes and the investment of power by external forces. In contrast many of the murals painted during the Troubles in Northern Ireland have attempted to bridge the dichotomy of fine and applied art by producing as far as possible transparent images reproducing reality. And this becomes possible because the murals deploy a direct message, against which meanings deriving from textual and visual attributions and appropriations can be reviewed. The early Bourgeois mural by contrast is a concentrated form of these problematizations. On one level its fine art sensibility produces iconography that lacks clarity, proclaims its own autonomy and obscures an understanding of reality. It is predisposed, in keeping with tendencies found in art that encourages contemplation, to proclaim an insight of a transcendental nature – a fixed centre, thereby displaying a strong tendency to remove itself from engagement in the larger social fabric. But on another level its radical political project demands a clear and transparent message, that is to say that its raison d'être is an overt political art activity. It thus stands on a verge where its axis pivots on a conflict between thematizing the gap between art and reality and producing signage that does not complicate and obfuscate signification by creating an experience outside of 'authorial intention'.

The reality with which the imagery engages in both the Northern Ireland murals and the Early Bourgeois mural can thus be seen to shift, be refigured and transcontextualized in direct proportion to the signification legitimated by the framing discourse. We know from Derrida that without the foundational transcendental signified to provide closure of meaning, every signified functions as a signifier in an endless play of signification, that context does not guarantee meaning and that the empty signifier may stand for many or even any signifieds; they may mean whatever their interpreters want them to mean. Greimas's project which focuses on the nature of meaning rather than the function of communication offers an alternative approach if not a solution to what Schleifer refers to as "poststructuralist formulations of the aporias of discourse, the making and unmaking of meaning in the 'deconstruction of signification, the undecidability of contexts and the levels in and on which signification is apprehended (Schleifer, 1987: p. xix). Taking as examples the lessons learned from this study, this means that political art may be understood in process terms as a mediating code between the pure activity of non-discrete moments and the immobility of discrete moments, that is to say between Life in duration and the immobile world of representational art. The provisionality of this process may be schemetized according to Greimas's semiotic square.



Here Law (the fairness of British justice/ the legitimating force of Wende) contradicts political art projects, as a route of mediation and regulation. In these terms the murals circulate between the punctuated format of traditional notions of fine art and the lived, living culture of the nationalist and unionist communities/East and West German. In the sense that the image does not reflect life but has its own autonomy life as pure activity, as pure duration is thus fundamentally inaccessible to the traditional arts. Nor can it be said of applied art that it concerns itself with life; even though the Northern Ireland environment, Belfast and Derry in particular, has been shaped by the applied arts such as architecture, urban planning, it is still left to life to find the best way to deal with all these designed products. The total expanse of its meaning is therefore to be found in the extent of that circulation. The aesthetic thematizations of politics work their way through the historical narrative of discrimination, ascendancy and marginalization. Sometimes the murals are individualized or express discrete quotations from historical sources. In audience terms the people who belong to Unionism/Loyalism and the people who belong to Nationalism/Republicanism eyeball each other across a space of performance conflict. But whether the Troubles reflect badly on the Republican/IRA cause or on Northern Ireland and her citizenry for example is a confrontation that is removed from a simple binary through the circulation of the elements. What becomes critical is the performativity of the law in the face of the performativity of these communities. Of course there is room for extensive debate and negotiation on the precise positioning of each element; but what makes it invaluable is not specifics but the way it moves beyond the binary Saussurean concept of signification to propose a more complex play of semiotic engagement. Thus while "Pure' art proclaims the autonomy of the signifier, Life has claimed to itself that to which the signifier refers—reality, meaning. This means that it is not only in the face of the performativity of the community that the performativity of the law is concerned, what becomes critical is its performativity in the face of the performativity of the aesthetic thematization of political projects; which is precisely the tension that

was generated in the Northern Ireland murals prior to the Good Friday agreement. But as I have tried to show, following on the agreement the law has made an attempt to absorb the political project as a cultural one. Of course the law or framing discourse can never accommodate or appropriate a contradictory power structure, but neither can it ignore it and consequently as an ideological consciousness it becomes disturbed, implicated in Greimas' "double relation of disjunction and conjunction" (Greimas, 1987: p. 49). Patrick Pearse who was at the forefront of the Easter uprising in Dublin in 1916 insisted the battle they were fighting at that time was not merely against Britain/England, but was a struggle for "the national soul", compromised and contaminated by centuries of interference and occupation. When he wrote in *The Spiritual Nation* that true independence, "requires spiritual and intellectual independence as its basis, or it tends to become unstable, a thing resting merely on interests which change with time and circumstances", he might just have been referring to the present day in Belfast. The reflexivity of 'interests which change with time and circumstances' is hence caught up in the circulation of elements A similar discourse is apparent in Germany with the transcontextualized cultural demand brought to the Early Bourgeois mural by the Federal Republic.

Contemporary media has problematized the question of art's iconography even further. We need only switch on the television to witness nation states displaying images of its troops killing the enemy; bombs exploding, blood and death. The same can be said of videos representing beheadings and hangings and the famous photographs from Abu Ghraib and Baghdad. I recall seeing TV coverage of Sadam Hussein being hanged. This ugliness, which we always suspected was hidden below the surface of the conventional idealized image, is now shown to us as terrifying and ugly as we expected it to be. As I have tried to show the function of these images is to show more than this or that empirical incident but rather to produce what Groys calls the political sublime, which intrudes on representational art and completely does away with the need for any critique of representation. The machinery of media coverage works almost automatically, in any event without individual artistic intervention. The function of art as a medium of representation and the role of the artist as mediator between reality and memory are here completely eliminated. Certain subversive performance practices, such as Viennese Actionism reveal similar aesthetic qualities to the iconography and style of these images, but these practices were aimed at undermining the beliefs dominating the artists own culture whereas the goal emerging in the media images is to undermine a different, other culture in an act of violence leaving the conservative values of the perpetrator's own culture unquestioned. This iconophilic imagery therefore proclaims the return of the real as visual proof of the end of the critique of representation. However once it begins circulation these images are subject to criticism, against censorship and suppression and those mediating forces that invest

the image with its own power (the conservative values of the producing state for example) and of course against their symbolic and commercial competition for the strongest image.

Derrida has reminded us that there is nothing purely modern in this relation between media and terror and that with radio and television what is called organized propaganda has already since World War I played an essential role in 'declared' war (Derrida in Borradori, 2003: p 109). The distinction between war and terrorism is thus problematic, an ambivalence compounded by the September 11 attack on the twin towers in New York. The worldwide implications of the event in which different geopolitical shifts have joined in some way the anti-terrorist coalition and invested 'September 11', has enabled certain parties in presenting their adversaries not only as terrorists but as international terrorists to oppose them, it is claimed, not through counter terrorism but through war. But what would September 11 have been without television. Without insisting on full discussion here, it is fair to say without doubt that maximum coverage was in the common interest of both the perpetrators and those who wanted to declare war on terrorism. And in the case of the United States, as Derrida argues this coverage was to expose its vulnerability, to give the greatest possible coverage to the aggression against which it wishes to protect itself (Derrida in Borradori, 2003: p 108). Invested in the discourse 'bin Laden' is a narrative that has associated the name 'bin Laden' at least by metonymy with the organization of the attack on the target United States if not as the central or ultimate target. And now narrativized images of his death are inscribed in this discourse—which I cite here as examples of censorship, suppression and the investment of power in the media image. The object image of his shooting is precisely the media image that does away with representation; this emerges not from actually viewing the image but from its censored explanation that it shows vivid bloody destruction of his body and head. These graphic proportions of the shooting it is claimed could if published unleash an iconoclastic backlash of international anti American terrorist sentiment. This narrative therefore adds to the continuum of the Bin Laden discourse; at the same time the object image but now–absent image is made easily recognizable with an explanatory text that DNA confirms bin Laden's identity, which renders his death merely tautological. This object image but now–absent image (but which we consequently know to be true because it has been paid for by a real loss of life—a loss of life that is documented by that image) evokes a new image. This new image informs us that terrorist violence originates in the narrated identity represented by a 'bin Laden' (a name I am using as a synechdoche) which a necessary act of war destroys. The new image is thus iconophilic of the conservative values of resistance which replaces those values of vulnerability that were garnered when the twin towers were blown up. On the other hand the object image but now–absent image does not exist except insofar as it is an element in the bin Laden discourse. At the same time four video clips of bin Laden have been released which show a man made mute by the removal of the audio that once

accompanied these videos, excised by those now attempting to define and control how he will be remembered; that is to say he is shown alive. Paradoxically by silencing his voice so emphatically—making him mute—they force the viewer to contemplate what was behind the words. And that was a man. A man, whose life and death has been narrativized who ordered mass murder and who was killed, his body dumped at sea; but a human being all the same. As are all killers. This organized propaganda makes these conclusions possible because we are ready to recognize as true beyond any criticism of representation the images of terror and war as valid images of the political sublime that both the terrorist and the state terrorist create with their image production machines in which politics no longer represents itself as beautiful. Here the mists that once harboured the sublime have given way to the blaring light of interrogation.

For the political mural though I argue a positive position emerging from this onslaught on the power of aesthetic imagery. Although the art world seems to be small compared with the power of the media market the diversity of images circulating in the media one can safely say is highly limited compared to the diversity of images circulating in contemporary art. And to be effectively propagated and exploited in the commercial mass media these media images need to be easily recognizable to a broad target audience. The variety of images circulating in the mass media therefore is vastly more limited than the range of images preserved in museums or produced by contemporary art. But of course the fact that art functions in the context of the art market and that works of art in this context are commodities is beyond doubt. And yet the work of art is not just a commodity but also a statement in a public place when it is made and exhibited for those who do not wish to purchase it. As Groys argues, typically visitors to a public exhibition do not view the art on display as commodities, or rarely do so. Rather they react to the tools by means of which the artists position themselves in the public space as objects of observation. Numerous exhibitions, biennials, triennials are created in the first place not for those who purchase art but rather for the masses, for anonymous visitors who will probably never purchase the art. In the contemporary period the incorporation of the art system in mass culture is well advanced; and it has become part of the mass culture not as the production of individual objects traded on the art market but as an exhibition praxis combining architecture, design and fashion just as the artists of the Bauhaus and others had already predicted in the 1920's and 1930's (Groys, 2008: p.180).

But the political mural, although also produced outside of market conditions has very little chance of being accepted by the general public because they do not correlate with the dominant aesthetic sensibility. As I have shown they carry iconoclastic messages engaged in the contest for a balance of socio-political and economic power and frequently are made against public taste. And of course as we have seen the dominating art discourse identifies art with the art market and remains blind to any art that

is produced and distributed by any mechanism other than the market. But as Groys projects times do change and perhaps in the near future a new sensibility for radical art and politics will emerge again (Groys, 2008: p. 163). The art of the Reformation on which the Early Bourgeois mural is structured is such art; the art of the Little Masters (*Kleinmeister*), the Cranach workshop, the Beham brothers bear witness to this amazing political polemic in which the autonomy of the individual to choose another framework and terms for negotiation was exercised through the religious iconography and structures designed to eliminate it. We have seen in the hunger strike murals produced during the Troubles similar modes of performative action that have transcended the discipline inscribed in those structures of control. The capacity therefore of art to appropriate iconoclastic gestures directed against it and turn these gestures into new modes of art production is critical to its chances of survival.

The privatization of common property in East Germany and the capture of private markets in Northern Ireland have seen to the failure of the visions that emerged in the Early Bourgeois mural and many of the political wall paintings of Northern Ireland, visions of art put to the service of a revolutionary balance of power. But mural art functioning on its own as political propaganda has found a strange bedfellow and a particularly relevant space in the art world. And it is in the public space that has become available to art with the arrival of mass culture that the significance and power of the political mural emerges; because mass culture has a relevance that is occasionally overlooked as Groys suggests following Fish and Said, and that is its relevance to otherness or alienation. Mass culture he argues creates communities of viewers. They are transitory; its members have little knowledge of one another; their composition is arbitrary; they lack a shared identity. Unlike traditional communities that have emerged historically and which derive a commonality from their shared past, mass culture creates communities irrespective of any shared past, communities with no preconditions. But these communities are unable to perceive themselves as such. Their gaze is directed too much forward at a stage or screen for the members to be adequately able to perceive or reflect on the space in which they find themselves and the community of which they have become a part.

That however is precisely the sort of reflection with which the installation of art made in the context of political propaganda is concerned; space itself becomes the major object of perception. Within this space the viewer takes up a certain position, of which the viewer is necessarily aware, because by reflecting on the whole space of the assembly, they feel compelled to reflect as well on their own perspective. At the same time because the individual cannot take in the whole, the individual must necessarily overlook something that can only be evident to the gaze of others. However, these others who have gathered together in the space are not separated culturally; they can imagine one another in one another's position. Thus for example in the case of Northern Ireland I have tried to show in my

introduction regarding the Loose Talk poster, how the possibility of speaking or performing as another undermines the surety of sectarian mapping. The striking political murals painted in the Supreme Court in Mexico City which I referenced in my study of torture in the Early Bourgeois mural provide a powerful example of the public space as a medium that strategizes the audience into an implication with the content of the installed works. Here the interchangeability of bodies in space becomes evident—the familiar and the unknown are constantly changing places, what happens here can happen anywhere to me or you or them, and this constant exchange of places offers the only way to distinguish the familiar from the alien that remains open.

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